

Basil Chulev

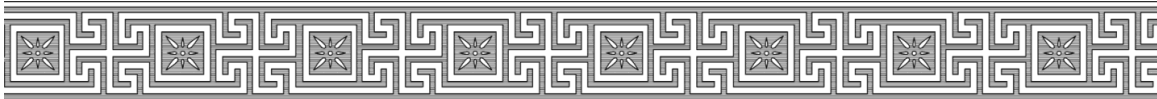
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## Tracing the origins of the first Christian community in Europe



**MACEDONIAN AUTOCEPHALOUS APOSTOLIC  
CHURCH**





**Basil Chulev**

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## **MACEDONIAN AUTOCEPHALOUS APOSTOLIC CHURCH**

**Informal laic reconstruction of the millennial history and evolution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Ohrid Archiepiscopacy, from known and unknown ecclesiastic sources. An independent comparative, paleographic, and impenitent unconventional study and reading of the many historical testimonies, cited from various sources, spanning from the most basic common knowledge, through paleographic writings, until the modern link-citations available in the numerous published and online books and lexicons. A retrospective of the Macedonian all-inclusive bimillennial Christianity continuum, observed through the prism of autochthonous Macedonic traditions and religion.**

**2017**







ѡ. И видѣніе въ ноцѣ явіся Павла: мѡжъ нѣкій бѣ  
Македонанинъ стоѡ, моля єго и глаголя: пришедь въ Маке-  
донїю, помози намъ.

***"And a vision in the night appeared to Paul: There stood a Macedonian man, and prayed him, saying: 'Come over to Macedonia, and help us.' "***

– Acts 16.9.



The intention of this essay is to provide simple and easy to understand overview of periods from the Macedonian Christian history and culture. It avoids substantial and detailed explanations that consider wider historical background of the described events and persons, and is written primarily for those approaching the topic for the first time. It also avoids complex explanatory comments or insightful footnotes on the citations from the sources. The given explanatory notes are prevalently etymological.

The introduction comprises the periods from ancient history of Macedonia and presents a brief overall retrospective of the advent of Christianity in Macedonia. The time-frame elaborated as a main theme of this essay ranges from the beginning of the 1st century AD until today. The interpretations given here are meant to enhance our understanding and appreciation of the first Christendom in Europe. They are focused strictly on the Macedonian aspect of the story disregarding the wider geo-political perspective.

All the dates and references to centuries are „AD“ (lat. *Anno Domini* - used to indicate our era after the commonly accepted date of Christ's birth) except where indicated otherwise. Throughout this essay, Macedonia/Macedonians generally refer to the area of the mainland north of Mount Olym (Lat. *Olympus*), southeast of the Mount Šar (Lat. *Scardus*) and west of the Rhodope Mountains. Macedonian Peninsula refers to what is called „*Balkans*“ as of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, occupying the part of southeastern Europe that lies south of the Danube and Sava rivers and forms a peninsula bounded by the Adriatic and Ionian seas in the west, the Aegean and Black seas in the southeast and east, and the Mediterranean Sea in the south.

Latinized/Anglicized and/or Macedonic names are given in parenthesis, some names and technical terms are transliterated and these will be obvious when they appear. Other technical terms and titles (e.g. *Nova Roma*, *Iraklea*, etc.) have been transliterated directly from their original forms with as few changes as possible: thus *Iraklea* rather than ‘*Heraclea*’, and *droungarios* rather than ‘*droungarios*’, which is neither “*Greek*” nor Latin.

The terminology and concepts that are modern inventions (such as ‘*Hellenistic*’ or ‘*Greek*’) are altogether avoided. Such empirically wrong terms, used improperly by the modern historiography, were originally meant to describe totally different categories (such as the artistic periods) and were unknown to the ancient world. Their continued use perpetuates misleading assumptions.

The modern-historiography ‘privileged moments’ are largely avoided too. For example - for historians today one such a privileged moment (of places and monuments as ‘*clasical*’) is ‘*Clasical Athens*’, the Athens of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. But when and why is so regarded? Was ‘*Clasical Athens*’ regarded as “*Clasical*” already in antiquity? By whom?

The definitions, current meanings and related concepts of the words in English are taken from the Oxford American Dictionary and Thesaurus (Mac OSX version 1.0.2 for PowerPC) and/or Meriam-Webster online dictionary. For the transliterated words in Macedonian is used the online ENCYCLOPÆDIA MACEDONICA (MAKEDONSKA ENCIKLOPEDIJA) vol. 1 & 2, and online Macedonian dictionaries (idividi.com, off.net, etc.).

The sources that were used are listed in the References at the end of this essay.



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## Tracing the origins of the First European Christian Community - Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church

Macedonians, the renowned conquerors and rulers of the ancient world, are not distinguished only because of Alexander the Great and the empire larger even than the one of the Romans. Nor only because they're the eldest and maybe the only old nation in Europe that still preserves its original name and identity as from the 3rd millennium BCE. They are also distinguished as the very first nation<sup>1</sup> on the European continent that have invoked and accepted the Christian religion at the very dawn of this era. Lidia, a young Macedonian woman from Philippi in Macedonia, was the first-ever baptized Christian on the European soil. In the Macedonian Jerusalem, Ohrid, was founded and built the first ever known Christian Church on European soil, in the 3rd century AD, St. Erasmo Lihnidski<sup>2</sup>, long before the Christianity was recognized by the Roman state.<sup>3</sup> Macedonia is still a homeland of the oldest Patriarchate/Archiepiscopacy of Justiniana Prima, and ultimate Holy See of Ohrid. There is also the honorable plateau of the first ever known university in Europe - St. Clement's University on Plaošnik hill above Ohrid. Macedonian Apostolic Church – Ohrid Archiepiscopacy by succession is one of the four Ancestral Apostolic churches.<sup>4</sup> Probably no other church, especially in the Slavic Orthodox world, has such a lawful path and development as the Macedonian Church. In the AD 51 the Apostle Paul in Ohrid founded the first church community in Europe. Upon his return, in the year 54, he raised it to the rank of Diocese; in AD 535 Upravda (Justinian) elevated it to the rank of Archbishopric (known as Justiniana Prima), and this Archbishopric in AD 553 was also confirmed by Pope Virgil. In 987 Tsar Samoil elevated it to the rank of Patriarchate, which was confirmed by Pope Gregory in 999 with holy papal epistle.

For having a more clear idea of the geopolitical and ecclesiastic divisions in this part of the European continent, with which this discourse on the initial Christianization of Europe is dealing - the then Diocese Macedonia under Roman occupation was made up of the following administrative provinces: Macedonia Prima, Macedonia Seconda, Epirus Nova, Epirus Vetus, Thessaly, Achaia, and isle of Crete. Most of these were situated within the historical boundaries of the geographic and historical

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<sup>1</sup> Nation, because the Macedonians had their own Macedonian language, Macedonian calendar, their own kingdom, religion with their own Macedonian pantheon, their own ancient Macedonian constellations, etc.

<sup>2</sup> <https://journeymacedonia.com/churchesmonasteries/ohrid-saint-erasmus/>  
[https://mk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A1%D0%B2.%D0%95%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BC%D0%BE\\_%D0%9B%D0%B8%D1%85%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B4%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8](https://mk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A1%D0%B2.%D0%95%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BC%D0%BE_%D0%9B%D0%B8%D1%85%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B4%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8)  
[https://mk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A6%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%B2%D0%B0\\_%E2%80%9E%D0%A1%D0%B2.%D0%95%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BC%D0%BE%E2%80%9C-%D0%9E%D1%85%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B4](https://mk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A6%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%B2%D0%B0_%E2%80%9E%D0%A1%D0%B2.%D0%95%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BC%D0%BE%E2%80%9C-%D0%9E%D1%85%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B4)

<sup>3</sup> CNN - Macedonia the root of Christianity:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDW92UkN7Gw>

<sup>4</sup> In explaining the official position of the Roman Catholic Church regarding the primacy of Christian Churches in Eastern and Western parishes, Roman Pope Nicholas I (858-867) in the distant 859 said: “*Roman curia for true churches considers only those which were established by apostles, such as the - Macedonian, Roman, Antiochian and Aleksandrian church. Although the church clerics of Constantinople and Jerusalem call themselves ‘patriarchs’, however, that’s without meaning, because they are not regulated by the apostles.*”



Macedonia, once part of the ancient Macedonian empire, and subsequently a Roman province, officially after 148 BCE. Provinces boundaries followed the natural terrain divisions for millennia.



Above: the administrative division of the Roman provinces in Macedonian Peninsula. Despite the continuous changing and renaming of different areas on several occasions, throughout the centuries they remained generally in the same boundaries as administrative regions under Romeian, and later under Turkish rule, until the 19th century and creation of the new nation-states. Nevertheless, Macedonia and Macedonian people remained the only nation in Europe that preserved their original ancient ethnic identity, name and home, unchanged for more than 2400 years

Next page: map of the ecclesiastic division of Roman provinces in the Macedonian peninsula on Dioceses in the 6th century (AD 535).





After the division of Roman empire in Eastern and Western parts in AD 286, and effectively in AD 395, Macedonia became a proper of the Eastern-Romeian Empire, until the Turkish invasion in the 14th century. Nevertheless, even then it preserved its geographic, ethnic and ecclesiastic entirety. Thenafter in the 19th century it was divided and further reduced under the occupation of modern neocolonial/political subdivision (WW1 and WW2) to the present-day Republic of Macedonia.



Above: **Macedonia in its historical geographic borders, divided with the Balkan Wars (1912-1913)**

Thus, already in the first century AD, when Macedonia was still a province under Roman occupation, the people that today are under jurisdiction of the modern Macedonian Rightglorified<sup>5</sup> Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy<sup>6</sup>, invoked and accepted the teachings of Apostle Paul, one of the first major Christian missionaries and theologians. The Apostle was born in the year of the world 3998, or about two years before the advent of our Lord. He was a far-famed Doctor of the Law, a person of great wisdom, a man of authority and eminence. Around Macedonia also preaches the Apostle Andrew, who sets apostle Urban for first episcopo in Macedonia.

<sup>5</sup> “Pravoslavna” in plain Macedonian, from “Pravo”- rightful, and “Slavna”- glorified/celebrated (by glory of Jesus); i.e. “*Orthodox (church)*” in the western-Europe modern nomenclature.

<sup>6</sup> *Makedonska Pravoslavna Crkva - Ohridska Arhiepiskopija* in transliterated plain Macedonian, abbr. MPC-OA; a Christian Church descended from the ancient Macedonic Christian religion and official national church of today Macedonia. Like the other Orthodox Churches MPC-OA does not recognize the authority of the Roman pope and uses its own elaborate and ancient forms of holy service. The chief Orthodox Churches (often known collectively as the *Eastern Orthodox Church* in western Europe) beside Macedonian include the national churches of: Albania, Bulgaria, Grease, Moldavia, Montenegro, Russia, Romania, Serbia, Ukraine, White Russia (i.e. Belarus), etc. The term “Orthodox” is also used for other ancient churches, mainly of African or Asian origin, e.g., the Coptic, Syrian, and Ethiopian churches.





Above: **St. Apostle Paul**

Paul took this most important step of carrying over the doctrine of the Gospel from Troas to Macedonia in AD 51-54, and from thence spreading it further in the countries across the rest of Europe. He made three missionary voyages in Macedonia. His voyages in Philippi, Ber (Lat. *Beroia*), Solun, and other places in Macedonia are widely known. Nonetheless, archaeological and other evidences show that beside these three cities in the first century AD in Macedonia were formed many other early Christian communities - in Amfipolion (Lat. *Amphipolis*), Bargala, Iraklea Linkesta (Lat. *Heraclea Lynkestis*, today Bitola), Lihnid (Lat. *Lychnidos*; today Ohrid), Skopje (Lat. *Scopis*), Stob(i), Tiveriopol (Lat. *Tiberiopolis*), etc. It is quite

in the spirit of Macedonic antiquity (a spirit which was by no means familiar to the author of the Acts of the Apostles) that so important an era, including so much of the future history of the cause of the Gospel, should be inaugurated by a vision that came to Apostle Paul. In this vision a Macedonian appeared to the Apostle Paul with a prayer that he should go over to Macedonia and help them (XVI.9).

At the time this happened Paul was at Troas, the capital city of a small country of the same name, situated to the west of Mysia (in Asia Minor), and on the borders of the Hellespont. This city, rebuilt by Lisimach (lat. *Lysimachus*), one of Alexander's greatest chelniks<sup>7</sup>, was peopled from the neighboring Macedonic places, and originally called Alexandria, or *Troas Alexandri*, by the builder, in honor of his great leader.



As Macedonian colony, known as from the times of Hittite Empire as *Willuša*, it persisted until the rise of the new invading power from the west, the Romans. Thus, it soon lost its more distinguished Macedonic name, and with the surrounding country retained that of *Troas* merely, and in the Apostles days it was a noted sea-port, where travelers from the upper parts of Asia usually embarked for Thrace and Macedonia.

<sup>7</sup> "Chelnik" - chieftain, general; a 'military leader' in plain Macedonian.





While remaining there, apparently in a state of uncertainty as to his future movements, Apostle Paul beheld in the night time a vision, which at once determined him as to the course he should pursue. A Macedonian man appeared, and besought him to pass into Macedonia to their assistance. Literarily as written in the Bible: *...a Macedonian stood on the far shore and called across the sea, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!"* (Acts of the Apostles 16.9)

Ѧ. ꙗко видѣхѣ възношѣхъ ꙗвѣхъ Павла: мъжъ нѣкѣхъ бѣ  
Македонанинъ стоѣ, мола ѣго ꙗко глагола: пришеда въз  
Македонїю, помози намъ.

Paul immediately related the importance of the vision to Luke, Silas, and Timothy, who, with unanimous accord, regarding it as a direction from heaven, willingly obeyed the requisition, and setting out from Troas, came with a fair wind directly to the legendary Samothrace. St. Paul, however, did not even land on the island, but, passing by, landed at Neapolis. Nonetheless, he and his companions didn't stop there. They next proceeded to Philippi. It lay about fifteen miles distant from Neapolis, and was the chief city of that part of Macedonia. The bibles also testify that Macedonia is the country where the first ever Christian on the European soil - a woman named Lidia from Philippi, was baptized first and converted to Christianity.

The occurrences which are said to have taken place during the first Apostle's visit to Philippi, in Macedonia, belong to the most miraculous order of those which the Acts of the Apostles relates of him. Whilst Paul and Silas, it is stated, were spending some days in Philippi, they were followed, whenever

they took their way outside the city, by a young woman possessed with a spirit of divination, with the loud cry, "*These men are the servants of the Most High God, who show us the way of salvation.*" After the damsel had followed them for many days, Paul converted and blessed her in the name of Jesus Christ.



For prophesying the new teachings of Christianity the two Apostles were soon thrown by the Roman occupying authorities into the deepest prison, and held in the strictest confinement. But, as the Acts of the Apostles tell us further - at midnight Paul and Silas raised a loud hymn to god, heard by all the prisoners, which was followed immediately by a powerful earthquake, that caused the doors of the prison to be thrown open and the fetters of the prisoners to be loosed. At the sight of the open doors the jailer thought that the prisoners had escaped. But when Paul called out to him with a loud voice that they were all there, and he, falling at the feet of Paul and Silas, asked, "*What must I do to be saved?*" The answer was, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Further, Apostle Paul passed through Amphipolion and Apollonia, as the missionary journey lead him to Peloponnesus. Amphipolion was built about five hundred years before the Christian era. It was the capital of the first division of Macedonia, situated on the banks of the river Strumon (Lat. *Strymon*, today river Struma), and contained about ten thousand inhabitants. Apollonia was also a city of Macedonia, betwixt Amphipolion and Solun, and, although not of so much consequence as the former in any point of view, had yet sufficient importance to attract the Apostle's attention.



After that he returned to Asia Minor and stayed for sometime in Ephesus, and after visiting Jerusalem once again, Apostle Paul returned back in Macedonia. In this second journey, his deputies, together with



Titus, Jason, and Luke, the sacred historian, who had now rejoined him, accompanied the Apostle into Macedonia, at one of the cities of which the deputies separated from the remainder of the company, and proceeded forward to Troas to await their coming.

Even if there's no detailed historical records for his second voyage road itinerary, it must be assumed that St. Paul on his way to Matia and Dalmatia, must've passed somewhere through the western parts of Macedonia, otherwise he should've fly over, which for those times is very unlikely. So, undeniably he also passed through ancient Macedonian cities of Iraklea Linkesta and Lihnid (i.e. *Ohrid*). This was the route of *Via Egnatia*, the ancient Roman road, laid upon the track of even more ancient Macedonian road built by great kings of Ancient Macedon. He visited again Philippi, Solun, Ber, and other places at which he had formerly established churches, teaching and exhorting the disciples to remain steadfast in the faith, and to look forward with the full assurance of receiving the glorious reward that would ultimately be

theirs. Having thus, as far as lay in his power, discharged his duty to the absent churches, the Apostle proceeded through the remainder of Macedonia on his errand of charity, and even prolonged his preaching into Matia and Dalmatia, an extensive provinces to the northwest of Macedonia.

St. Paul, with Titus, Jason, and Luke, after tarrying a short time longer in Macedonia, and celebrating the feast of the passover at Philippi, sailed from thence by Neapolis, and after a voyage of five days rejoined the deputies back at Troas, having occupied about ten months in this mission, from the time he left Ephesus till its conclusion.

The third voyage of St. Paul to Macedonia happened to be after long journey to Rome, where he was taken as a prisoner. In this voyage Luke, the sacred historian, and Aristarch, the Macedonian, accompanied him. Two years after he was freed, but then he went to Spain, and thereafter by crossing through France he arrived as far as Britain, which at that period was Roman colony too. After the lapse of nine months passed in Spain, France, and Britain Paul embarked on shipboard, and proceeded by sea to Crete, a voyage as long and as perilous as any he had ever undertaken. Then he returned once again to Judea and Jerusalem from where he went back to Macedonia for third and last time. Apostle remained at Nicopolis till the winter had passed away, after which he resumed his labors, and passed through the greater part of Macedonia. He then embarked at Cenchrea, and, crossing the Aegean Sea, landed once more at Troas, from which, after a short stay in that city, he proceeded to visit Timothy at Ephesus.

During his long journey in the western Europe the Apostle undoubtedly suffered many of those persecutions and afflictions which awaited him wherever he went, and which were so admirably calculated to prepare him for the now fast-approaching termination of his earthly avatar. It is supposed that at Ephesus he received a divine intimation that his labors were nearly at an end, his sufferings drawing to a close, and that he must, ere long, gain the crown of martyrdom at Rome. He bade farewell to Timothy, his most dear and valued friend, and then, with characteristic firmness, set his face towards Rome. And although now bending under the weight of years, journeyed with a light heart to meet his impending fate. The manner in which his last journey was accomplished is involved in obscurity. Some think that the Apostle passed through Macedonia, again visiting the churches he had planted there, and, crossing the Adriatic Sea into Italy, proceeded by land to Rome. Others are of opinion that he embarked at Ephesus, and went to Italy directly by sea. This is more probable.

St. Paul arrived at Rome for the second and last time soon after the commencement of the first general persecution of the Christians in the reign of the tyrant Neron. The Apostle was pointed out to this instrument of tyranny and oppression as the principal leader of the obnoxious sect, and instant imprisonment was his lot. The crown he panted for, he soon obtained. The evil-minded hatred for Christianity returned to Rome. Paul was taken from prison, and with but little form of trial, condemned to death; the only privilege accorded to him being that, as a Roman citizen, he should suffer by the sword.

Christian belief brought by St. Paul in Macedonia found wide popular acceptance and firm stronghold there since the apostolic times in first place because of Christianity role as opposition movement to the Roman yoke. Macedonians, notorious for their constant rebellions and never ending struggle for freedom, found new hope in Jesus and monotheism.

Facing the widespread popular acceptance of the new religion, the pagan Roman occupators, starting from the time of Neron (AD 54-68) channeled their desperate practices of oppression and tyranny toward the Christians with cruel inquisition-styled pogroms. The storm of persecution having thus commenced, it arose, ere long, to the height of an ungovernable tempest, which soon dispersed further the ill-fated Christians of Macedonia. From this wretched barbaric period of the human history remained the



proverbial saying of “throwing to the lions”, hence the Christians were really thrown to the lions for public amusement in Roman circuses.



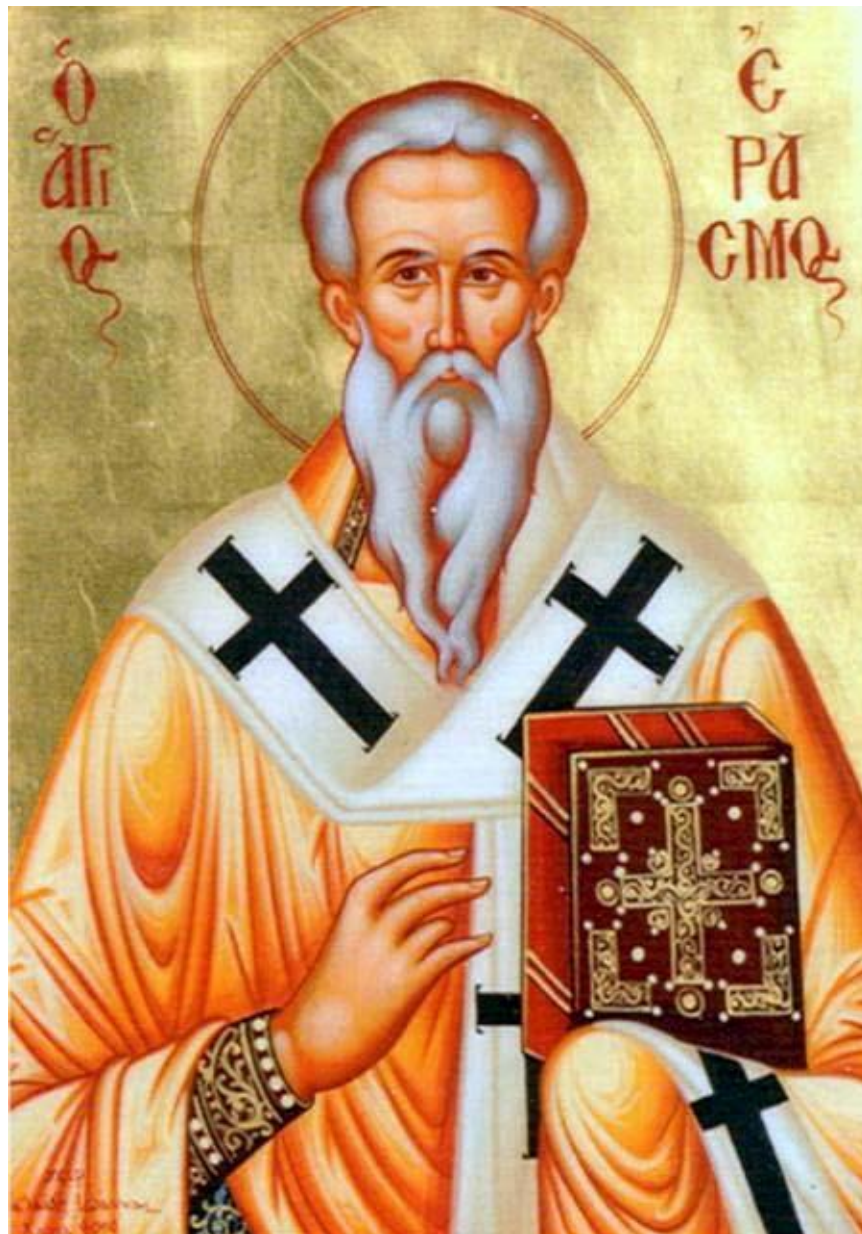
*“Their name is coming from Christus, who was executed in the time of Tiberius by one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate; and this very dangerous heresy, even if halted for a moment, not only reappeared again in Judea, where was the source of this evil, but in Rome too, where all disgusting and shameful things find recovery and popularity... The killed ones (Christians) are laughed publicly, they were raged and thrown to the dogs, or crucified and put on fire like the torches in the night...”*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Cornelius Tacitus, *Annales* 15, 44, ed. Charles Dennis Fisher (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906)

## The Early Christian Era

Almost absolute absence of Christian temples from the first centuries of Christ Era testifies the ruthless persecutions by Romans toward any manifestation and symbol of Christianity. Thenafter, despite the incessant bloody oppression and inhuman treatment, near the Macedonian Jerusalem, Ohrid, in the 3rd century AD was founded and built the first ever officially known Christian abbey/church on European soil - the church of St. Erasmio (Lat. *Erasmus*), of which the ancient remains were recently discovered. With this small church in the 3rd century were laid the foundations of the nearby future ultimate institution and autocephalous Holy See of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy.



Above: an ikon of St. Erasmio



The last desperate Roman emperor that tried to bring back the old pagan beliefs was Flavius Claudius Julius. During his reign of terror in Macedonia were slaughtered the 15 Tiberiopolis Martyrs (Sv. 15 Tiveriopolski Mačeniци).<sup>9</sup> Their antagonistic martyrdom transformed into cult, and is celebrated by Christians in Macedonia until today, and thanks to them and other believers the Christian worship spread like forest fire across the whole Macedonian Peninsula and abroad.



In AD 295, the reforms of Diocletian (284-305) had seen Macedonia assigned under Diocese Moesia, one of the twelve newly established Dioceses of the Roman empire. From the until-then one and unique Province of Macedonia three administrative provinces were carved: Macedonia, Thessalia and Epirus Nova. Soon after the dioceses became 14, as Diocese Moesia was again divided in two - Diocese Dacia and Diocese Macedonia. And the Provinces of Macedonia, Thessalia and Epirus Nova were reassigned

<sup>9</sup> [https://mk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Св.\\_Петнаесет\\_тивериополски\\_\(струмички\)\\_маченици](https://mk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Св._Петнаесет_тивериополски_(струмички)_маченици)

again under the Diocese Macedonia. Then emperor Valentin II (364-375) created the province of *Macedonia Salutaris* that comprised Macedonia and Dacia, and so on...



Above: illustration from 'Cosmographia Scoti, Notitia dignitatum'. Etc. folio no. 090v  
Basel, 1436

The centennial Roman terror against the Macedonians in the occupied Macedonian territories continued with the same barbaric obduracy, but now the terror focused especially on the Christian Macedonians. The Roman barbarism lasted until AD 313, when the oppression against Christians was finally halted by the emperor Konstantin I the Great, when with the famous Milan Edict he finally recognized and permitted



the practicing of Christianity as one of the religions in the Roman empire. On top of that in AD 330 the capital of the empire was transferred by Konstantin (anglicized *Constantine*, Macedonian himself), into his newly built city on Bosphorus, Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma (Latin: *Constantinopolitana Nova Roma*, anglicized: *Constantinople*). No one in the old world expected such a striking event and switch of the balance. This geopolitical earthquake sent shock waves across the whole Mediterranean, and gave the new impetus to the Macedonian Christian community, and particularly to the Macedonian church and its par excellence central position in the Macedonian Peninsula.

Thus, the Christianity was finally legalized by emperor Konstantin I the Great in AD 324, and the church in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma was elevated into Ecumenical (i.e. Imperial) Patriarchate. Then the Roman inhuman policy of subduing everyone and everything by sword and flame was adopted by their very victims, i.e. the Christians. Thus, they finally succeed into coming to power at the end of the Roman empire in the 4th century AD. In AD 380 due to its mass acceptance, Theodosius I even proclaimed it as the state religion. Then, already widely accepted Christianity, came out of illegality in Macedonia as well.



The astonishing move of the emperor Konstantin was strongly contested by the churches in Alexandria, Antioch and Rome. These self-admiring execrate churches simply didn't expect such an unpredictable development from this great monarch of Macedonic origin, as they were all aiming to become the exclusive center(s) of the new universal credo. By building his Holy See on Bosphorus, Konstantin I the Great blew away their blasphemous dreams, and grasped the monopoly over Christianity.



Although, these intransigent events didn't change much the extremely complicated position of the newly established Diocese Macedonia, as the Macedonian Apostolic Church found itself in the middle between the hammer and anvil of the powerful spheres of interest of old Rome and New Rome (i.e. *Constantinople*). Macedonia became the axis around which the ecclesiastic schisms of east and west will contort during the following centuries, and Macedonian Apostolic Church became a contested Christendom in the middle between the other two, over which the Eastern and Western congregations will fight incessantly ever since. A dire example of how unjustly the other churches comported toward the Macedonian Apostolic Church is the AD 381 letter of the pope Damasi I (366-384) in which he calls on the episcopo of Solun, Acholiy, to “*stand firmly against the ‘Macedonic heresy’(?)...*”<sup>10</sup>



Today, two millennia after, the Macedonian Apostolic Church is still largely opposed and in treacherous denial by most of the modern politically-biased and divided modern churches, which stubbornly try to excommunicate this most oldest of all European churches. Once strongly forbidden and unthinkable “church nationalism” become the rule when the power of the Ecumenical Patriarchate declined in the 13th century. Instead of god's love and brotherhood – blasphemy, immorality, politics, territorial and other “greater” interests prevailed over the initial pure Christian credo professed by god's disciple on earth, Jesus Christ.

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Damasi Papae ad Acholium et Alios Macedoniae episcopos,’ *Epistola V*, 365–369 (PL 13); Damasi Papae ad Acholium Thessalonicensem episcopum, *Epistola VI*, 369–370 (PL 13); J. Baco.

After the legalization of Christianity on behalf of Konstantin I the Great, many Macedonian cities within the Diocese Macedonia were risen into Holy and Episcopal Sees, testimonies of which we have in the records of participants of the first holy synods of all churches: the metropolitan episcopo Dake (Lat. *Dacus*) from the Skopje episcopacy (Lat. *Episcopae Scopis*), and Budimir and Evagriy of Stob(i) episcopacy are noted in the records of the very First Ecumenical Holy Synod of all churches in Nicaea in AD 325.



From the testimony of Eusebius the Caesarian we also know that the episcopo from Macedonia indeed participated on the Holy Synod in the city of Tyre and on the inauguration of the Holy Temple built by Konstantin I the Great on the (supposed) tomb of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem in AD 335: *“The emperor made godsend laws and gave great tribute by ordering around the cave in which the savior was born a great and marvelous temple to be erected, deign of god. ... Episcopos from all provinces participated the blessing of the church. ... Thus Jerusalem became the centre of many archiereyes from all the provinces and the whole city became a mess of many servants of god. Macedonians too sent an episcopo from their metropolis.”*<sup>11</sup>

As participants of the Holy Synod in Serdica in the autumn of AD 343 are mentioned the episcopos: Aeci from Solun, Antigon from Pella, the ancient capital of Macedonia), Paregoriy of Skopis (today Skopje), Evagriy of Iraklea (today Bitola), Basus of Diocletianople, Porphyry of Phillipi, Paladiy of Dion, Gerontiy from Beroia, and Zoxim of Lihnid (i.e. Ohrid);<sup>12</sup>

Macedonian episcopos were present also on the Second Universal Holy Synod of all churches in Constantinople in AD 381; on the Ephesus Holy Synod in AD 449, where the episcopo Petko (Lat. *Quintil*) participated; on the important 4th Ecumenical Holy Synod in AD 451 in Chalcedon, Bitinia, where were noted the episcopos Dardany from Bargala and Nikola from Stob(i); etc. etc.

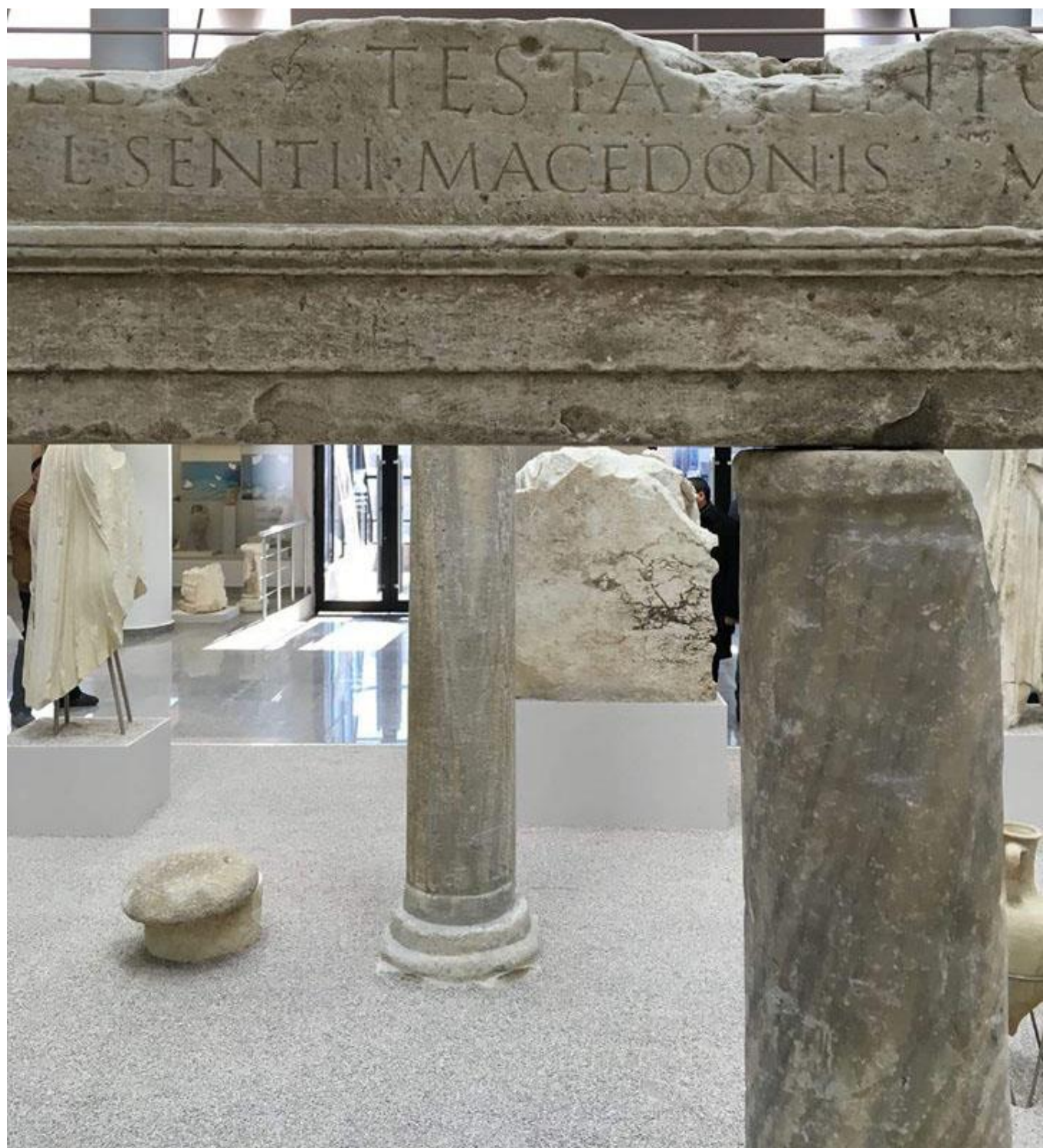
According to archaeologic, epigraphic and other evidences from Macedonia, confirmed early Christian episcopacies in the IV century (when Christianity was officially recognized and legalized as religion) were: Apolonia, Dion, Lihnid (Lat. *Lychnidos*, today Ohrid), Partikopol, Amfipolion, Cassandrea, Serr(es), Arg(os), Iraklea Linkesta, Stob(i), Bargala<sup>13</sup>, Harmonia, Kalenidin, Zapara, Dober, Tiveriopol, Scopis (i.e Justiniana Prima, today Skopje), etc.

<sup>11</sup> “*De Vita Constantini*,” by Eusebius from Caesarea IV, XLIII p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> Mansi III, col. 38–39, 42–49.

<sup>13</sup> Founded by St. Jerome (lat. *Hieronimus*) in the 4th century.

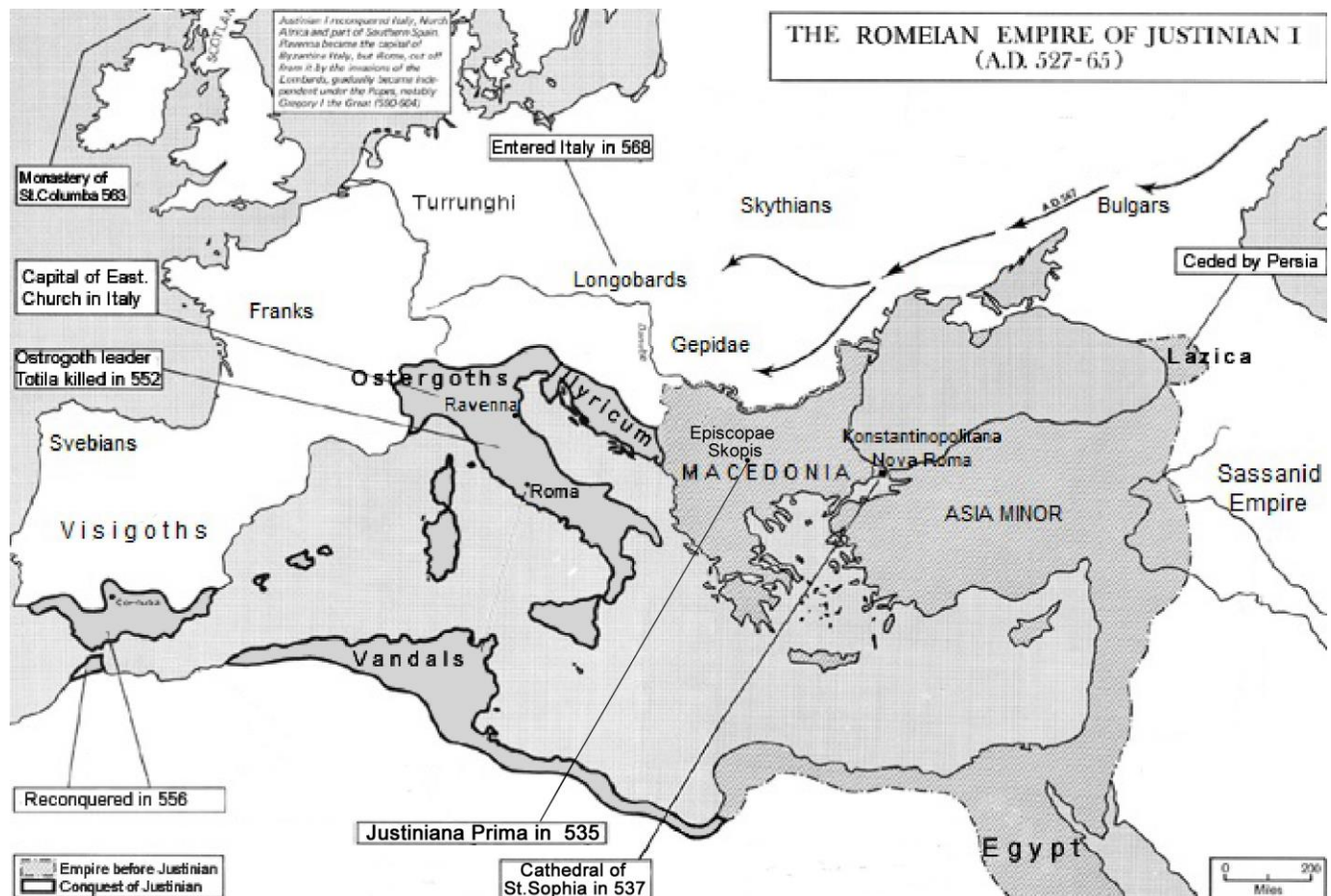






## Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church of Justiniana Prima, and the origins of ‘Christianimosity’

In AD 535 Macedonian Apostolic Church finally received the recognition of its inhered dignities and God-given title, and was officially equaled by its apostolic right on the same level with the other apostolic and non-apostolic churches and holy sees in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma, Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Cyprus. The Romeian emperor Justinian I the Great then on 14 April 535 decreed in his Novel 11<sup>14</sup> the elevated status of Episcopal city of Skopje (Lat. *Scopis*) into independent Autocephalous Apostolic Archiepiscopacy and Holy See of the Macedonian Church in the Diocese Macedonia, with his very own imperial title of “Justiniana Prima”. The city of Skopis/Skopje was chosen for new Holy See by him for



three reasons. 1<sup>st</sup>. it was the nearest great metropolis and renown episcopacy in the vicinity of his natal village of Tauresium (today Taor); 2<sup>nd</sup>. because of its central strategic position in the Macedonian peninsula, from where Justinian wanted to project his holy-imperial power and ecumenical authority toward central and western Europe; and 3<sup>rd</sup>. but not the less important - because of the universal Macedonic linguistic spheres of influence. Namely, Skopje was situated at the exact center of the Macedonian Peninsula, and at that time was a melting pot between the East and West, North and South, an important and cosmopolitan centre, as it is even today. Its very name means exactly that – “Skup” it’s

<sup>14</sup> *De privilegiis archiepiscopi Primae Iustinianae.*

‘assembly, a gathering point’. Beside the universal autochthonous Macedonic language(s) one could’ve hear also corrupted Latin (i.e. Wallachian/Aromanian at its grassroots), Romeian-corrupted ‘Koine’, Gaulic, ‘Ladino’, etc. Thus, the Justinian I intention was to firmly grasp and to reinforce under his ecumenical aegis this international junction and cosmopolitan hub, which Skopje always was, and use it as a religious and cultural bridge toward the freshly re-conquered western parts of his waste Romeian Empire. Under the jurisdiction of reaffirmed and independent autochthonous Macedonian Apostolic Church of Justiniana Prima the emperor Justinian I inserted the following provinces and regions: *Dacia Mediterranea*, *Dacia Ripensis*, *Moesia Secunda*, *Dardania*, *Praevalitana*, *Macedonia Secunda*, and a part of *Pannonia Secunda*. All these regions until then were under (in)direct church jurisdiction of Rome’s papacy.<sup>15</sup> For the first archbishop was inaugurated the Skopje episcopo Katelian; then after him followed Benenat of Skopje (Lat. *Benenatus Scupensis*) in AD 553; then Paul; Jovan (Anglicized: *John*) I in AD 591-602; Leon, etc.<sup>16</sup> With this unprecedented move his powerful Christian state unhesitatingly reinvigorated the medieval continuity of the Ancient Macedonian civilization and reaffirmed its ancestral crucial position. Nonetheless, it underlined the rule of this intensely Macedonic monarch, Justinian I the Great.



Above: **the monumental statue of Justinian I the Great in downtown of Skopje, today capital of Macedonia**

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<sup>15</sup> This Justinian’ 6th century imperial decree, beside despoiling the larger part of Macedonian peninsula from the Rome’s sphere of (ecclesiastic) influence, generated profound rupture and millennial animosity of the Roman Holy See toward everything Macedonian and Orthodox. Rome practically lost forever the previously conquered Macedonian territories. On top of that, this unprecedented destitution was executed by the hand of an emperor who himself was Macedonian by origin. This unforgiven and frozen Roman-Macedonic conflict lasts until today.

<sup>16</sup> "Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces Danubiennes de l'Empire Romain" by Jacques Zeiller, 1967.

After the one of Konstantin I the Great, this was the second cardinal move that provoked huge turnover in the balance of already divided churches in Europe - in favor of the Eastern Orthodox congregation, which now held under its jurisdiction the whole eastern Mediterranean area and great part of central Europe. The most important point in the inauguration of Episcopal city of Skopje in Justiniana Prima was the regained independency of Macedonia from Rome. Thanks to Justinian I the Great Macedonia retrieved some of its

168 LIB. III. TAVOLA X. D'EVROPA			
<i>Degli Almopari.</i>			
Orma	Coria	45.45.	41.30
Europa		46.30.	41.20
Affalo		46.20.	41. 6
<i>Di Orbelia</i>			
Gariſco	Gariſto	47.50.	41.40
<i>De gli Eordai</i>			
Scampe	Oggi V' d'agrada	45.45.	40.20
Diboma		45.45.	40.10
Daulia	Eladaſagni	45.30.	40. 0
<i>De gli Eſirei</i>			
Eſireo		46.20.	40.50
Deboro	Reſido	46.40.	40.45
Aloro	Dianoro	47.15.	41.10
<i>De gli Iori</i>			
Ioro	Nonigrado	46.45.	41.15
<i>Di Sintice</i>			
Triſtolo	Tamoriza	48. .	41.30
Parcepoli	<u>Scopia, capo di Macedonia</u>	58.40.	41.40
Eraſlea Sintica		49.30.	41.40
<i>Di Odomantice, detta Edonide.</i>			
Scotufa		49.30.	41.45
Berga	Berga ſecondo Stefano Beiza.	49.50.	41.40
Gaſoro	Leſtorocori	50.15.	41.45
Anſipoli		50. .	41.30
Filippi		50.45.	41.45
<i>De' Deſſareti</i>			
Enia	Moncaſtro	46.46.	40.15
Licido .	Loerida città ſopra il lago Loerida	46.50.	40.20
<i>Di Linceſte</i>			
Eraſlia	Xenaxus	47.40.	40.40
<i>De' Pelagomi</i>			
Andariſto	Voſtanza	48. .	40.56
Stobi	Starichino	48.30.	41.30
<i>Di Biſaltia</i>			
Arolo		49.10.	41.20
Euporia	Perita	49.20.	41.10
Callitene	Cidna	49.30.	41.10
Oſſa	Olira	49.45.	41. 0
	Berza		

Above: **Scopis (Skopje), capital of Macedonia, "La Geografia" by Vincenzo Valgrisi, 1561**

buried for centuries and clouded by Roman occupation importance and splendor, and remained what it always was - the cradle of the European Civilization and virtually the primal source of Christianity in Europe, which is still to be found in this region in its very original form, as it was from the very beginning – on contrary to the complicated and alienated Anasthasian-reshuffled western Catholicism, and preponderant Ecumenical Patriarchate in the east, that largely differed from the original Christian belief and teachings of Jesus Christ in exchange for political power and bare profit.

However, the Justinian I decisive intervention blocked for time being the expansionist perspective of the alienated Roman-catholic church toward east, and sealed the almost exclusive “ownership” of Eastern Orthodox Church over the worshipers of the Eastern Europe and great Asian continent, in what will later



became the great Russian Empire in the IX and X centuries. In fact, the Justinian's act provoked immediate but futile protest of the pope Agapit I (535-536). And after one decade of continuous protests from Roman papacy Justinian I finally reduced (?) some jurisdictions of Justiniana Prima, as mentioned in his Novel 131<sup>17</sup>, published on 18 March 545. But, ironically enough he also lists and confirms again the same provinces that remained equally under jurisdiction of Justiniana Prima.



What this supposed “receding” meant? Well, nothing in particular. The emperor Justinian made this arbitrary move of false “rearranging” of the new Holy See in Skopje, to be seemingly put again under the competence of the Diocese of Rome, and the archbishop of Justiniana Prima was even formally promoted into a ‘papal vicar’... This shaggy “rearrangement” effectively it came out not at all to be what it looked like, and maybe was even deliberately made because of the consistent minority of already Latinized citizens (i.e. Vlachs) of the then Archiepiscopacy in Skopje. But, the clearly obvious and final intention of the emperor Justinian to eradicate the Roman church claws from Macedonian Peninsula was irrevocable. His design in achieving that was to unequivocally and at any cost obtain the full acceptance of his newly elevated but old autocephalous church in first place, even by apparently giving it back in management to those who already lost it, just to momentarily appease them in order to obtain their official and final resignation. Because, once founded, imperial Justiniana Prima could not be undone. In his limitless imperial power Justinian I the Great was fully aware that this was just a confidence deception, and question of time, until this carrot-style subjugating of the Roman papacy finally succeeds. Let's not forget – during the rule of Justinian I the Great, Rome was in subordinate position, and the Eastern Roman Ecumenical power could've still be well projected to Italy long after his death. For example, in AD 663 the disobedient Pope Martin I (649-654) was arrested, brought to Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma for trial, judged, and exiled to Crimea. Imperial basilicas with eastern styled baptisteries were built by Justinian I in Savonna, Ravenna, and as far as Tharros in Sardinia, and Eastern Roman Empire ruled from Constantinople the entire Mediterranean and Asia Minor. A related issue is that the majority of churches in the Diocese of Macedonia, with a few exceptions earlier and later, were built between AD 460 and the middle of the 6th century.<sup>18</sup> On the great Church Synod in AD 535 the presiding bishop stated that “*There is nothing on this earth that can be done without the will and order of the emperor.*” And accordingly, already the pope Vigilius was forced to submit his full agreement and benediction for the

<sup>17</sup> *De ecclesiasticis canonibus et privilegiis.*

<sup>18</sup> „Dacia Mediterranea & Macedonia Secunda in the 6th Century: A question of influence on church architecture” by Carolyn S. Snively, p. 217

third great Holy See in Skopje. This papal about-face prompted a Holy Synod in North Africa to excommunicate Vigilus, for the bishops of Milan and Aquileia to break communion with Rome, and for disappointing criticisms to be issued by the bishops of Gaul.

Thus, at the end Justiniana Prima was inaugurated “in perpetuum”<sup>19</sup> as the third in rang official Autocephalous Apostolic Church. Its elevated status and privileges where definitely confirmed on the Fifth Ecumenical Holy Synod of the Church, when in AD 553 the instauration of Justiniana Prima was institutionally proclaimed and affirmed by the highest church instances. The actual (territorial and ecclesiastic) loss for Roman papacy was final and irrevocable - Macedonian peninsula and in particular Macedonia after 7 centuries of Roman occupation returned absolutely free from any kind of Roman domination. As of then the Roman (later renamed “*Catholic*”) church will became the main enemy of the Eastern Orthodox Church(es), in a frozen religious conflict (Christianimosity) that lasts incessantly for almost 15 centuries (1500 years).



Above: a golden cross-pendant from the 6th century  
Negotino (ancient Antigona), Republic of Macedonia

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<sup>19</sup> *Forever* [adverb. Latin].

## **Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy**

Ohrid Archiepiscopacy was the next great step in the history of Macedonian Apostolic Church. Macedonian Archdiocese with its ecumenical archiepiscopacy Justiniana Prima, due to assimilation, separatism, and discrepancies of the various eparchies that once belonged to her, after the fall of the emperor Maurice (that had been killed in AD 602 following the mutiny among the Danube forces), and under the pressure of the Avar, Bulgar, and other barbaric invasions from the northeast, in the year AD 602 retreated from Skopje to Lichnid (*Ohrid* as of 9th century), and as of then became also known as *Ohrid Archiepiscopacy*. The Ohrid Archiepiscopacy fully inherited the jurisdiction over the same eparchies of Justiniana Prima, and in many medieval sources is indifferently noted by the same old title. John Skilitzes, Quien and Farlati, for example, equally identify Justiniana Prima with Ohrid and New Epirus (Lat. *Epirus Nova*).<sup>20</sup> The highest presiding body of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy was the Episcopal Holy Synod in Ohrid, constituted by bishops from all eparchies, and was headed by the supreme patriarch (elevated by Tzar Samoil) and/or the Ohrid Archbishop.

The last structures of the church organization from the (old) Justiniana Prima in northern parts of the Macedonian Peninsula vanished after AD 614.<sup>21</sup> But even if heavily diminished in eparchies and cornered in Ohrid, Macedonian Apostolic Church never ceased to be the supreme center and only reliable influential Christian institution in Macedonia and the wider region of Macedonian Peninsula. We can see that from the neighboring church eparchies in the new Bulgar vassal kingdom, where under strong supervision from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma the official liturgical language of the Bulgar eparchies until AD 893 remained the Romeian “Septuagint” version of highly corrupted ancient Macedonic Koine, when it was outclassed by contemporary Macedonic language and rite.

Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy, beside its ecumenical duties, functioned also as a cultural stronghold of the Macedonian nation and its aspirations for freedom and independence from Constantinople and Romeian yoke. Thus, its ecumenically inherited independence and complicity with popular masses generated different rebellions and uprisings, like the one of the prince Hacon (614-616).

The periodical enforced restoration of the Eastern Romeian power in Macedonia and Thessaly retook during the reign of the dowager-empress Irene, when the Romeian army led by the logothete Stavre (Lat. *Stavracious*) that defeated and subjugated the Macedonians in 783. The introduction of the theme system (which meant new divisions in an attempt to subjugate again the ever rebel Macedonians) began after this event. What followed was a massive Romeian colonization in the areas of Strymon, especially in 810-811, during the reign of Nikephoros. By this renewed colonization Constantinople aim was to further Romanize the Macedonians, and also to reduce the threat from the invading Mongolic tribes of Magyars, Avars and particularly Bulgars under Khan Krum. However, despite all the efforts of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to maintain its dominant ecclesiastic and ruling position in the Macedonian Peninsula, due to linguistic affinities it failed to do so. The imposed administrative Roman Latin and Romeian-Septuagint version of

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<sup>20</sup> "Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces Danubiennes de l'Empire Romain" by Jacques Zeiller, 1967, p.385 footnote: "Oriens christianus" Vol. II, p.281.

<sup>21</sup> "The Church in the Final Period of the Late Roman Danubian Provinces" by Alexandru Madgearu, 2010.



Koine were rejected and inevitably replaced by the vernacular Macedonic liturgical language and the reformed **Glagolitic Script** that was used by Ohrid Archiepiscopate as of 9th century - the **Cyrillic**. This modified Glagolic script, was adjusted for wider popular acceptance into simpler version by **SS. Cyril and Methodius**, and later was renamed into "**Cyrillic**" by their disciples Naum and Kliment Ohridski, in honor of its inventor and compiler.

St. Constantine-Cyril worked as a missionary in the Bregalnica eparchy, which is indicated in the texts of the Assumption of Cyril and in the 'Solunski Legendi' ('Thessalonican legends'). By some scholars, the Bregalnica mission is brought into relation with Cyril's older brother Methodius', who was back then appointed as Archon, before his missionary activity. Bregalnica mission in the scientific literature has long been devoid of new testimonies, as the primary sources about the SS. Cyril and Methodius do not explicitly speak of their activity in the Bregalnica eparchy, but the later historical sources definitely speak



of the baptism performed by Constantine-Cyril along the Bregalnica river. A later Chronicle also speaks of the construction of "White churches" in Ovche Pole at the end of the 4th century. Several researchers and distinguished authors of Cyril and Methodius' time believe that these sources are actually based on older sources. More reliable scientific verification is offered in the study of the role of the Bregalnica region in the Old Church-Macedonic epoch. The written testimony of Theophylact Ohridski about the 15 Strumica martyrs, and the transfer of part of their relics to the Bregalnica bishopric, has been confirmed to have full authenticity. The confirmation was offered by the archaeological and historical-artistic artifacts

of exceptional importance after the excavation of the Church of the 15 Martyrs in Strumica, which was initiated by Academician D. Koco, Prof. Dr. Blaga Alexova and Prof. Dr. Petar Miljković Pepek. Prof. Dr. Blaga Alexova, after discovering the large five-apsidal church with a synthronon and martyrium in its southern part, already in 1985 announced the factual confirmation of the remains of five of the Strumica martyrs transferred and buried in this monumental medieval church, which is evidenced by the testimony of Theophylact Ohridski. This thought Dr. B. Alexova even more reinforced in her book, with the publication of Glagolitic and Cyrillic graffiti letters from the sacral buildings near Krupište. On the existence of similar graffiti, crosses and other signs Dr. Alexova also points to other monuments from the Bregalnica region. The monumental dimensions of the temple in Krupište with a synthronon, a martyrium, the characteristics of the building, the graffiti and the chronology established by a numismatic find, in their entirety, contributed to express their conviction that the episcopacy cathedral of the Bregalnica eparchy from the end of the 9th century had been discovered and that here was the center where Macedonic worship was thereafter held by the disciples of Kliment Ohridski. The author of the book expands his thoughts on the sacred complex Krupište in another direction. Namely, Dr. Alexova believes that the Bregalnica Episcopal Cathedral and Diocese is at the same time the cathedral of Kliment Ohridski, suggesting identification with the Velička Diocese. The author of the book thinks that the missionary activity of Cyril the Philosopher took place in the previous chronological phase of Bregalnica, before his activities among the Khazars and Moravians in Great Moravia.

Seeing the relentless popularity of Macedonian Apostolic Church and its popular form of rite, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma in 9th century changed radically its policy toward the Macedonic liturgy and script. Acknowledging that they cannot eradicate it, nor ignore the fact of its capillary-popular diffusion across the whole Macedonian Peninsula and central Europe, the Romeian



emperors then tried to use it as a tool in their avail, by recognizing it and helping its propagation. The Word of God was the far cheapest and undisputed way of ruling over some territory, without the necessity of waging a costly wars and building numerous military strongholds. And the Macedonic idiom was the universal vernacular medium across the whole Macedonian Peninsula, Pannonia, Great Moravia, Ukraine and Russia. Nonetheless, in that time the Eastern-Romeian political power reached its apogee thanks to



the leadership of Macedonian Dynasty (867-1056), and the Macedonian territories were once again the backbone of their second empire. Through Macedonic Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy and its disciples, they re-enacted the old era Macedonic cosmopolitan element of multicultural policy, and ruled in the Name and the Word of God, assisted by vastly popular Macedonic liturgy and by Romeian emperor.



However, the most responsible for this great Macedonic revival were the two erudite Macedonian priests and saints, Cyril and Methodius. They were born in Solun<sup>22</sup> in the family of a well-to-do Romeian drouggar (Lat. *Drouggarios* - a military and administrative official in the Romeian empire)<sup>23</sup> by name Lav.<sup>24</sup> Born in AD 826, Cyril was the youngest of the seven children in the family. Methodius was about ten years older. The countryside around Solun was predominantly Macedonic, and the brothers grew up with a native knowledge of the local Macedonian dialect. After having the best education of their time they became the finest ecclesiastic and diplomatic agents of the emperor Michael III Comnenus and the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. Their ecumenical/diplomatic missions in Arabia and Khazar Khanate are well known.

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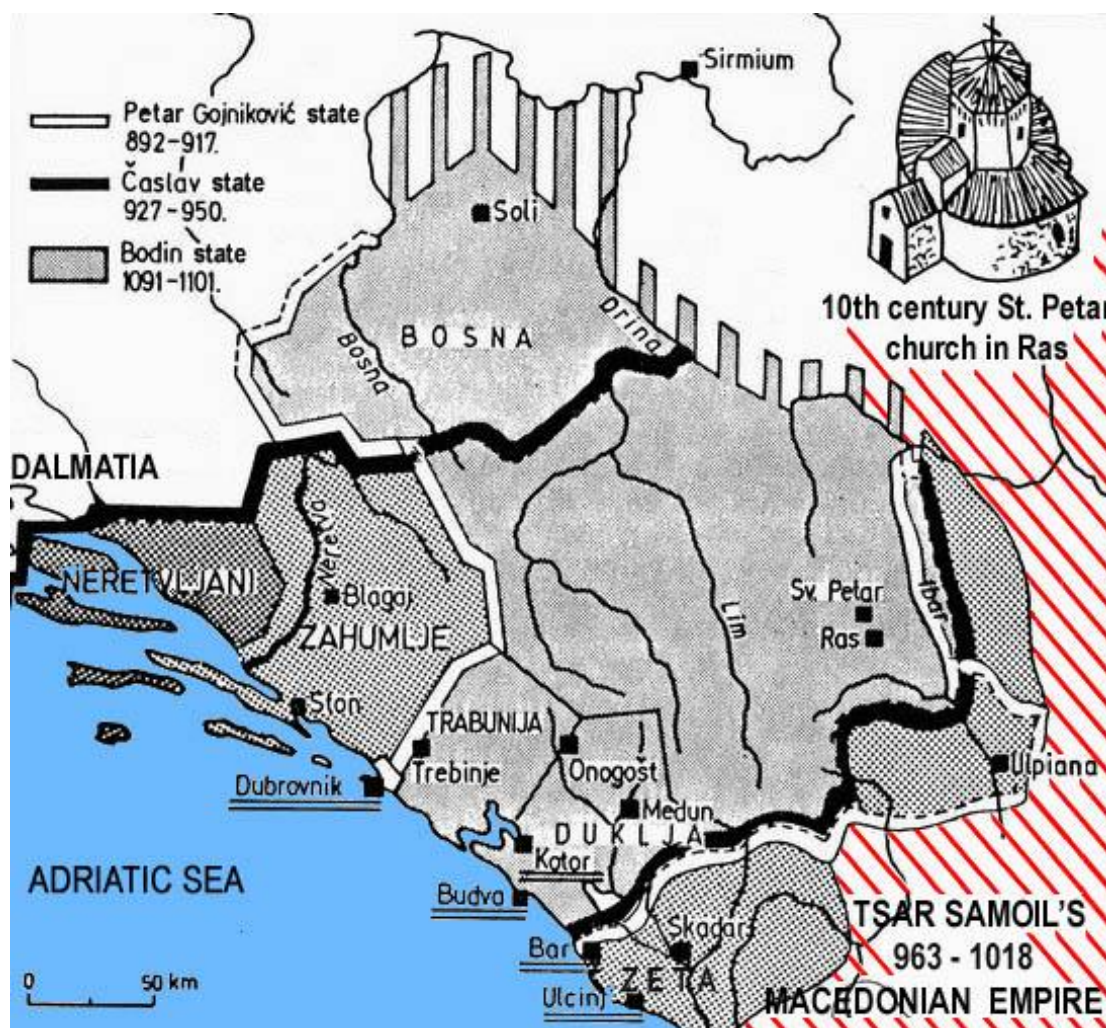
<sup>22</sup> Latin: *Thessalonica*, from Macedonic “*Tesalo-Nika*” - ‘Victory over Thessalia’

<sup>23</sup> From pure Macedonic “Drugar”- pall, friend in plain Macedonian.

<sup>24</sup> “Lion” in plain Macedonian.



First the Principality of Raška (i.e. today *Servia/Serbia*), due to geographical, ethnical and ecclesiastic vicinity officially adopted the Old Church Macedonic rite and Glagolic/Cyrillic script from Macedonia already in 862.<sup>25</sup>



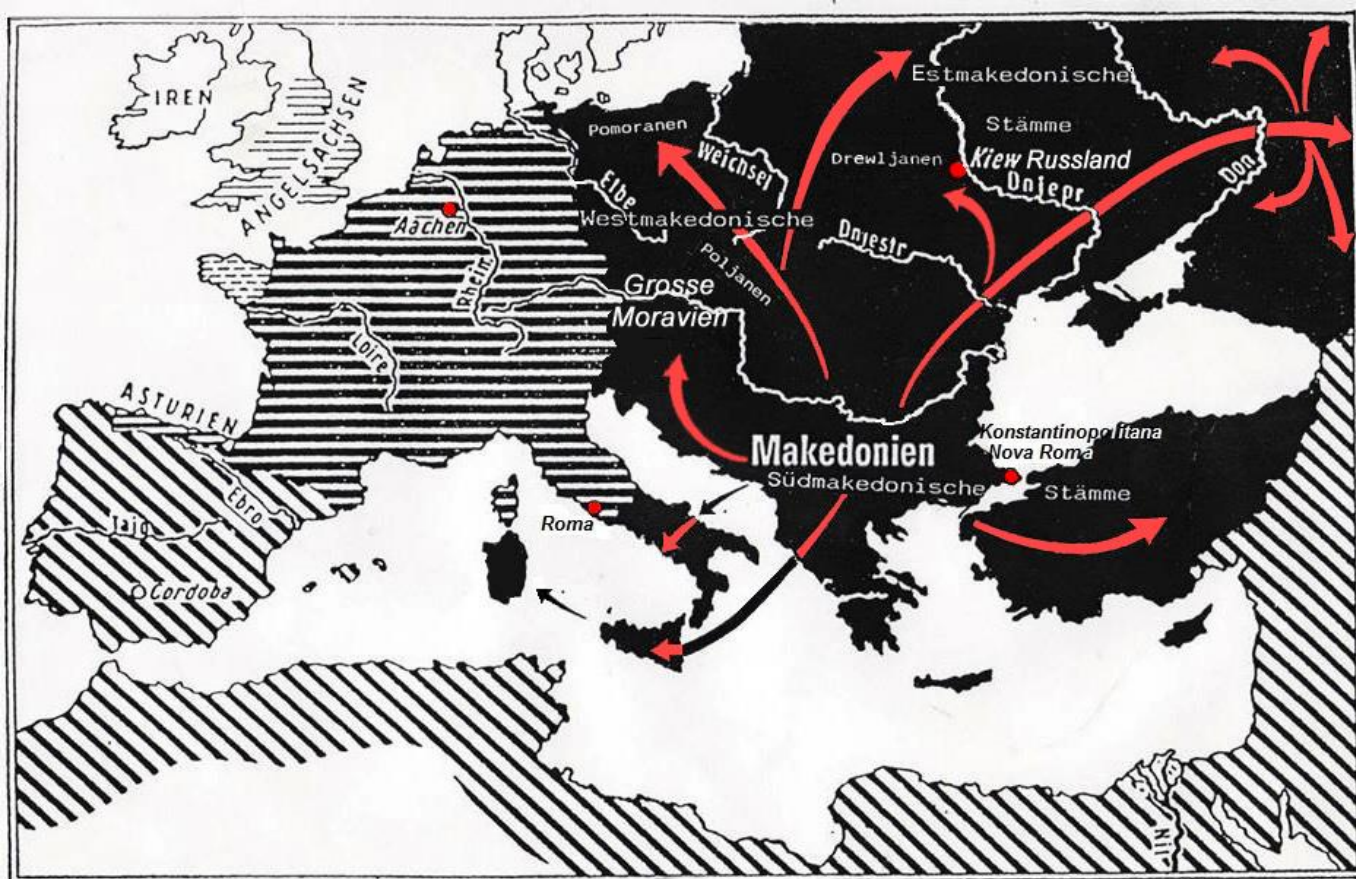
Above: principality of Ras (Raška) in the 9-11th century

In 863 the prince Rastislau of Great Moravia followed the suit and requested from Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma to send Macedonic Christian missionaries, in order to introduce Macedonian rite and script in

<sup>25</sup> In the „Life of St. Cyril“, in the list stored in the Rila Monastery, it is said that before leaving for Great Moravia he was in Kherson on the Dnieper river estuary on the Black Sea, and: *“To bring the Gospel and the Psalter within Russki’s the writing is (already) written and the person I used to speak speaks it, and talking to him through the power of speech put and soon admit to clean and telling and marveling at him praising God,”* it follows from this that the Russians had not only letters before Cyril and Methodius, but there were already Christians before his mission to Moravia; for they already had the gospel in their language. This circumstance is consistent with church history, which says that the Black Sea Russians already had their own church in the 4th century.

his kingdom, in a language that his suzerains could've understand. "You are from Solun. All people from there speak Macedonic language fluently,"<sup>26</sup> the Romeian emperor Michael dismissed Constantine/Cyril, the philosopher, and his brother the abbot Methodius with these words as they commenced their mission amongst the overland Macedonic community in Great Moravia and its capital Velegrad. It comprised the major area of Central Europe, including the territories which are today part of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Austria, Germany, Poland, Romania, Croatia, Serbia and Ukraine.<sup>27</sup>

Emperor Michael was fully aware of the power of Old Church Macedonic rite, and its profound acceptance as a medium among the Macedonian population across the Macedonian peninsula. No other tongue, neither the Roman administrative Latin, nor any other language had the Macedonian immaculate and sincere intimacy to the Word of God, and emperor Michael correctly saw in it the opportunity of further enlarging his authority and empire's influence abroad.



Europa um 800

<sup>26</sup> "Vatroslav Jagich (1838-1923) was a Croatian language researcher and a famous expert in the area of Slavic languages (Slavistics) in the second half of the 19th century. He was very interested in the language of the old Slavs (staroslavenski jezik, Old Church Slavonic), concluded and proved that it did not originate in "the central plains of Pannonia" as most experts claimed, but in southern (Aegean) Macedonia." [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vatroslav\\_Jagi%C4%87](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vatroslav_Jagi%C4%87)

<sup>27</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Moravia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Moravia)

SS. Cyril and Methodius first mission amongst the Moravians took place during that renaissance period, as the Romeian empire entangled into great political turmoil and opened up for the first time to the world which had previously been regarded with diffidence, if not outright hostility. Cyril and his brother Methodiy did not actually traveled down the Via Diagonalis from Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma in 863.

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**SITZUNGSBERICHTE**  
4 DER  
KAIS. AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN IN WIEN  
" PHILOSOPHISCH-HISTORISCHE CLASSE.  
3  
**BAND CXXXVIII.**

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II.  
**EVANGELIUM DOBROMIRI.**

EIN ALTMACEDONISCHES DENKMAL  
DER  
KIRCHENSLAVISCHEN SPRACHE DES XII. JAHRHUNDERTS.

GRAMMATISCH UND KRITISCH BELEUCHTET  
VON

**V. JAGIĆ,**

WIRKL. MITGLIEDER DER KAIS. AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN.

I.

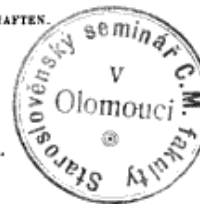
GRAMMATISCHER THEIL.

MIT DREI TAFELN.

WIEN, 1898.

IN COMMISSION BEI CARL GEROLD'S SOHN

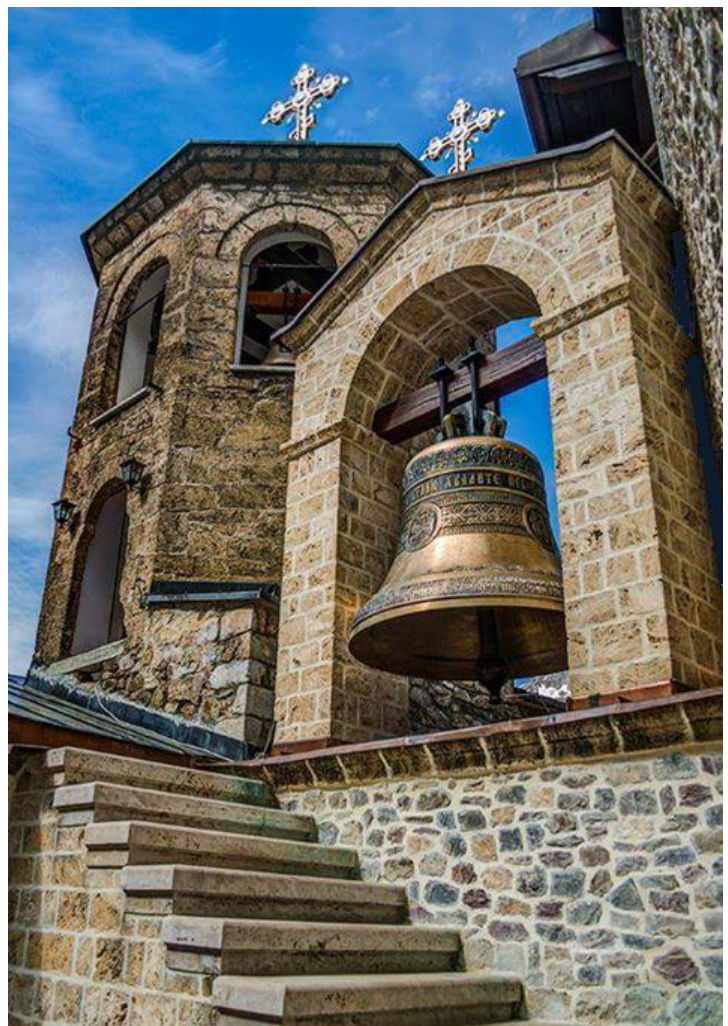
BUCHHÄNDLER DER KAIS. AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN.



Above: Croatian linguist Vatroslav Jagić "Dobromir's Evangel – One Old-Macedonic Monument", a 1898 grammar and critique study of the famous Macedonic gospel from the 12th century



Instead, they took the via Axis (Mkd. *Oska* <=> *akso(s)*; lat. *Axius*) which goes north from Solun along the homonymous river *Axios* (i.e. *Bardarios* or today Vardar river) north to Episcopal Skopje / ex Justiniana Prima, then to Naissus, Sirmium, and up to Belgrad. Then in adopting the Old Church Macedonic rite/language and Glagolic/Cyrillic script next followed Bosnia in 867. SS Cyril and Methodius then journeyed up the Danube before travelling first to Venice and then to Rome (AD 869), where they had been summoned by the Pope Nicolas I. The next year (870) saw the new Bulgar settlers in Moesia and Thrace officially accepting Christianity. The problem of the newly formed Bulgar church in Preslav was settled at the ecclesiastical Council of Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma in AD 870 - it was reintegrated within the Macedonian Archdiocese. In the same year with the papal bull the Glagolitic/Cyrillic script became the fourth official holy alphabet (after Hebrew, Septuagint Koine and Latin) with which the word of god was to be preached. Why it was officially recognized by the Roman Papacy? - With this move old Rome just wanted to copy the same stratagem used by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma - a compromising-patronage policy of recognizing and legalizing under its aegis the so widely accepted and popular Macedonic linguistic medium of communication of coveted Macedonian Apostolic Church and widespread Macedonian Bogomilism. It was simply the “if you can’t win them, join them” stance, because the centuries of cruel persecutions and antagonism against Macedonian Apostolic Church didn’t manage to sway the Macedonic Christians not one step away from the path traced by the holy teachings of their lord in heaven.



Right: **St. Jovan Bigorski monastery bell tower**

All these events occurred in the course of a single decade, the sixties of the ninth century. This period is also significant as the time in which the reinforced and newly institutionalized Macedonic culture had strong return and progress among the Macedonians and other Macedonic peoples across the Macedonian Peninsula. It was indeed a great decade in the history of Macedonia and the Romeian empire.

Further, the Old Church Macedonic rite and Glagolic/Cyrillic script was introduced in the Czech principality (in 873), Croatia (in 877), Wallachia (today *Romania*), Moldavia, etc. Thus, the Macedonian Apostolic Church and its Holy See in Ohrid never ceased to be the main epicenter of the Macedonic culture and Christianity, even though the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy was still closely surveyed and retained within the political sphere of interests of the East-Romeian empire.

Then (in 10th century) the Glagolic/Cyrillic liturgy in Old Church Macedonic language finally reached the Kievan Russia, where it became the official ecclesiastic language and script, and from there spread across other areas in East Europe, Asia and Africa (see Coptic).<sup>28</sup> Namely, after the Russian attack on Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma in AD 860 intensive collaboration and contacts with Macedonia and Macedonian Apostolic Church began in the young newly formed Russian state. Kiev, then in open war with Constantinople, looked for Christianity elsewhere - in Macedonia. In the following (10th) century, in order to assist its ally against Romeian empire, Tsar Samoil sent from Macedonia to Kievan Russia bishops, priests and deacons, and loads of holy books, with which were laid the foundations of the Russian Orthodox Church hierarchy, liturgy and literacy. And after the official conversion of the Russians to Christianity in AD 988, from Macedonia to Russia, carried by the Macedonian clergy, continued to flow entire volumes of Christian Macedonic education, culture and traditions. According to the chronicles, in 990 the Kiev Prince Vladimir sent to Bulgars a missionary called Mark Macedonian, 4 Bulgarian princes with their families were baptized.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> In this stadium of development it remained almost unchanged in Eastern Europe and Asia until today as modern “Russian language”. Modern Russian language is nothing else than the most originally preserved form of Old Church Macedonic, now used as official language in Russia, Belorussia, Ukraine, and the rest of the Russian Federation.

<sup>29</sup> <http://eng.kazan.eparhia.ru/>



Above: **7th century monastery in Vodoča, R. of Macedonia**

As Paul R. Magosci explains: “*One thing is certain: the written language of Kievan Rus' was not based on any of the spoken languages or dialects of the inhabitants. In other words, it had no basis in any of the East Slavic dialects, nor did it stem from some supposed older form of Ukrainian, Belorussian or Russian. Rather, it was a literary language, known as "Old Slavonic" (read “Old Macedonic!”), originally based on the dialects of Macedonia, an imported linguistic medium based on Old Macedonian*”.<sup>30</sup> M. Speranski explicitly underlines that in the first years of Christianity in Russia the Macedonic influence was the “*most fundamental*”, while M. G. Popruženko calls Ohrid Archiepiscopacy “*the pillar of the Orthodox Russia*”. For the undeniably strong ties between Macedonian and Russian churches speaks the unmistakable evidence of the very first Metropolitan of Kiev, Michail, who was an ecclesiastic deputy sent from the Ohrid Patriarchate hierarchy. Accordingly, Russian church’s position was under the jurisdiction of Archdiocese Macedonia and the then Ohrid Patriarchate (and later Archiepiscopacy again) until 1037.

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<sup>30</sup> "A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its Peoples" by Paul R. Magosci, p. 107.



## **Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archbishopcy Literacy School and St. Klement Ohridski University**

It is known that the University of St. Klement Ohridski on Plaošnik, at the end of 9th century already schooled some 3500 Cyrillic students. The Macedonian holy scripture there was studied and transmitted further by myriad of dedicated deacons, that through learning and preaching the Church Macedonic rite continued the enormous work of SS Cyril and Methodius. The founders of University and the Ohrid Church Literacy School, St. Naum and St. Klement Ohridski, were two of the most distinguished disciples of the SS Cyril and Methodius mission of in Great Moravia. After their forced expulsion on behalf of the German priesthood from Velegrad, the Moravian capital, they were forced to escape south, in Macedonia, where they founded their schools and churches.



Above: **restoration from the very rubles of the 9th century central basilica of the St. Klement Ohridski University at Plaošnik, on the shores of Lake Ohrid**

In the course of 10th and 11th centuries in these Library and Literacy centers studied and worked great number of literacy scholars, which were direct pupils of St. Klement and St. Naum. In that period of one hundred years (916-1018) were created numerous literacy monuments, which in first hand were written in Glagolitic, but soonafter had began the parallel Glagolitic - Cyrillic transcription. From the ten oldest preserved Cyrillic evangels eight were created in the 10th century Ohrid literacy school. The precise dating and localization was made possible and published in the studies by Russian scholar V. Moshin.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> “Ancient Cyrillic Manuscripts” and “Paleographic Album of Southslavic Cyrillic Script” by Vladimir Moshin (1966), published in Macedonia in 2011.

Thus, in the time of Tsar Samoil the Ohrid Archiepiscopal Literacy Scholl was the only great center of the Macedonic Literacy. And after the fall of the Bulgar kingdom and the death of Romeian emperor John II Tzymitsckes, Samoil conquered northern parts of Bulgaria until Lower Danube, and became neighbor of the Kievan Russia. This succession of the events made the fast-track communication between Macedonia and Russia possible. Thus, the Christianization of Kievan Russians in AD 988 was performed by the Macedonian preachers and Macedonic liturgy books and evangels from Ohrid. As confirmation to this avail firmly stand the numerous preserved Macedonian literacy monuments from the 10th century Russia: the Novgorod leafs<sup>32</sup> - remnants of Macedonian imperial evangel sent to Russia in 991; the Putyatinski evangel - confirmed Ohrid Literary School translation from original Septuagint Koine evangel; Limonariy psalter - with clear Bogomil tendencies; Evgenievski, Pogodinoff and Tolstoyevski psalters - obvious remnants of the Glagolitic psalters from Ohrid<sup>33</sup>; the 'Words' of Gregoriy; the 'Pandects' of Antioch; Illina book - a Macedonic liturgical dictionary<sup>34</sup>; etc. Paleographic and Orthographic, linguistic and textual particularities of all these and other literary monuments show their undeniable Macedonic origin and their extraordinary overland movement from the then Macedonian Church Patriarchate to Kiev principality.



Above: a marble parapet slab from the altar of St. Sophia basilica in Ohrid. X century, Republic of Macedonia

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<sup>32</sup> "Novgorod leafs and Ostromiroff evangel" by Vladimir Moshin, published in the 'Archaeographic Adds' 5, 1983.

<sup>33</sup> "Slavia Christiana and historically-cultural context of Russian literacy teachings" by V. M. Živov, 2000.

<sup>34</sup> "Anonymous Slavic Canon of Archangel Michael. Attribution, localization and dating" by A. M. Pentkovski, 2010.



Why is this matter of the widely accepted Macedonic rite/language so important? Because the possession of a common language is, in fact, the basis of a nationality, just as the possession of a common government is the basis of a nation. The claims of a nationality must be decided on linguistic grounds, those of a nation on political grounds, while racial unity is determined by kinship in blood and physiological traits. The “*imported linguistic medium based on Old Macedonian*” in Kievan Russia was the one that Russians could understand. Macedonic was the language destined to express the God’s Word, which “*will not pass away*” (Mt 24:35).



Above: IX-century monastery of St. Naum on the Lake Ohrid in 1928. The tower was demolished by the communist regime of the Yugoslavian Federation after the WW2

On the next page: IX-X century Zografski monastery on the Sacred Mountain (Sveta Gora) in Aegean Macedonia, founded by Macedonic masons from Ohrid: Moisey, Aron and Ivan Selima





How far the Macedonic people and language were (and still are!) actually spread in Medieval Europe can easily be deduced from the toponyms: the actual capital city of Republic of Macedonia was “*Scupi/Scopis*” already in the 1st millennium BCE, and still it is - accordingly “*Skup*” in all Macedonic languages even today means the same - a ‘round-up, gathering place’ (Latin-Anglicized - “*Scoop*”); “*Hamburg*” old name (before the 8th century) was *Treva* - ‘grass’ in plain Macedonian, accordingly to the landscape which is grassy, as the barren soil and strong winds from the Northern Sea simply doesn’t permit any higher vegetation there; “*Berlin*” means the ‘den/burrow’ city - *berlog* i.e. *b’rlog* being ‘den’, ‘burrow’ in plain Macedonian; “*Leipzig*” is the ‘city of aromatic trees’ - *lipa* in plain Macedonian; “*Vienna*” is ‘curved’ - ‘*viena*’ in plain Macedonian, etc. etc. Despite the invention of the modern “nations”, which are 18-19th centuries imperialistic creation, and respective corrupted “new” languages for the greater part of Europe, this and many other testimonies of the Macedonic language and script show that the basis of the distinguished Macedonian nationality was already a distinguished category as of the time of Filip II and Alexander the Great, and probably much earlier. And as their achievements and everlasting glory of Alexander the Great represent probably the highest peak in the whole Macedonian history, and Alexander’s heredity was justifiably remembered by the 19th century Macedonian bard, lecturer and scholar, Georgi Pulevski, in his 1879 song “*For the Macedonians*”:

*Our fatherland is this place so dear to Macedonians  
It was a kingdom under King Filip  
An old empire of Alexander the Tsar.  
Our Macedonian Tsar renown in the whole wide universe*

*as Alexander the Great.  
He left his empire in the Balkan Peninsula  
To all Macedonian highlanders...*<sup>35</sup>

From this perturbing medieval period it is evident that the Old Church Macedonic language and liturgy won the centennial battle against assimilatory attempts of the theocratic institutions of both Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople and Roman Papacy in Rome. In front of the uncontested popular acceptance of the Macedonian Apostolic Church they both failed to impose their institutional ecclesiastic supremacy over Macedonian Peninsula and wider region of central and eastern Europe. The simple reason for that was the overall vicinity of the Macedonian Apostolic Church to its own Macedonic people, a close relation that combined with the linguistic vernacular consistency preponderantly managed to defeat the imposed unintelligible elitist-institutional liturgies of the Constantinople Ecumenical Patriarchate and Rome Papacy.



Above: the expanse of the Ohrid Archbishopcy diocese around the year 1000

<sup>35</sup> Excerpt from the 'Southeastern Europe Joint History', Workbook 2, pp. 105,106.



Huge merit in this succeeding of the events had the Roman Church too, which constantly and by large extent meddled and conspired in the ecclesiastic affairs of other autocephalous churches across the Adriatic Sea. In spite of the fact that it was repudiated from the east by Justinian I the Great, western Roman church continued to advocate its predatory claim over the Archdiocese Macedonia through the eparchies that were still more or less under the influence of the papal vicariate in Solun (lat. *Thessaloniki*). To this avail the western Roman church even tried to rename Archdiocese Macedonia into “*Eastern Illyricum Diocese*”, with intention to fetch it to the ex-Roman province of Illyricum on the Adriatic coast, and this Roman-Latin name was meant for instauration of an exarchate (extraterritorial church) there, in attempt to rearrange and undermine the unquestionable power and influence of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy and ultimate Holy See in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma in Macedonian Peninsula.

Nevertheless, this artificial attempt to create a political exarchate largely failed due to the natural and factual independence of the Macedonian Archdiocese and its eparchies, and thanks to the inexcusable violations of the ecclesiastic rules by the Papal church in Rome, in an attempt to forcibly apply its rule over churches in Macedonia. For example, the pope Siricius (384-399) tempted the violation of the 6th rule of the First Church Synod from AD 325, by non-canonically and illegally giving higher ecclesiastic powers to the archbishop Anisius of Solun over other episcopacies, and by trying to impose unprecedented centralization over Archdiocese Macedonia. Siricius miserable attempt largely failed, and provoked only unanimous rebellion among the Macedonian clergy and episcopacies, that all stood together against this deprived ecclesiastic misappropriation and blasphemy. Throughout the millennia Macedonian Apostolic Church firmly remained on its course traced by Apostle Paul teachings, professed by the god’s disciple on earth, Jesus Christ.



## **Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy during the reign of Tsar Samoil and the emergence of Bogomilism**

The 10th century brought even more stateliness and ascendance for the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. During the reign of Tsar Samoil (969-1018) Ohrid Archiepiscopacy became totally independent from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma, and became even more influential, also thanks to the reviewed relationship and reconfirmed ecclesiastic recognition by the Roman papal state. Then, from old Rome the new Macedonian emperor requested and obtained badly needed international recognition from another Holy See. In 999 Samoil coronation was performed under the triple aegis of the western Roman Papacy, Ohrid and Tarnovo Archiepiscopacies. The Macedonian Apostolic Church was then also elevated into Ecumenical Patriarchate with the Holy See on the island of St. Ahil in the Lake Small Prespa by the newly enthroned Macedonian emperor.



Above: the remnants of the St. Ahil patriarchate cathedral on the homonymous island in the Lake Small Prespa

Below: map of the island of St. Ahil, the Ecumenical Patriarchate capital and Holy See of Samoil's Macedonic Empire



But, the Macedonian Apostolic Church rapid ascendance was also thanks to the appearance of the new form of Christianity, of yet another autochthonous Macedonic popular Christian movement - the **Bogomilism**.<sup>36</sup> The Bogomilism was the great popular medieval Christian movement that supported

<sup>36</sup> The first actual Protestant church in Europe. Severely oppressed and persecuted, as equally condemned and excommunicated by both Eastern-Rightglorified and Western-Catholic church. See: THE MACEDONIAN GENIUS THROUGH THE CENTURIES by Giorgio Nurigiani.1972, pp. 64,67,68. Also: "The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism" by Dimitri Obolensky.1948, pp.151, 259: "From the combined evidence of geographical factors, of indirect historical data and of later sources, which must now be examined, it is possible to prove that the cradle and subsequent stronghold of Bogomilism in the Balkans was Macedonia."



without reserve the Macedonian independency from Constantinople and other ecclesiastic holy centers. Bogomils performed real patriotic deeds and gave their assistance to Tsar Samoil when he and his brothers started the revolt against the long lasting occupation and feudal yoke of Romeians from Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma and their Bulgar vassals. In respond, during his four decades reign in Macedonia Tsar Samoil reformed Macedonian Apostolic Church and officialized Bogomil faith within the church institution, with the twin Holy Sees in Ohrid and Prespa, and third one - the Ecumenical Patriarchate on St. Ahil island. In sincere gratitude Samoil allowed them to live and profess their humble credo freely in his empire that stretched from the Adriatic to the Black Sea, and from Thessalia to Danube. And accordingly, the followers of Bogomilism became the strongest constituent part of the Macedonian Apostolic Church in the Samoil's state.



In terms of *heresies* and in particular the relationship between the dualism practiced by the Bogomils and that practiced by the later dualist sects (descended from Bogomilism) in Bosnia, northern Italy and southern France (respectively *Patarens*, *Cathars* and *Albigenses*), affirm to be proof of continuity and vivid exchanges between the different areas of Europe. Links between the Bogomils, the Patarens and the Cathars/Albigenses are such that it cannot be but taken into account. In his book, *The Origins of the Dualist Church of Dragunthia*<sup>37</sup> Bernard Hamilton also concludes that western heretics considered theirs and the one in Macedonia to be "*a single communion*". If anything, the real dichotomy was between moderate dualists and absolute dualists. In any case, both can be traced back to Macedonia.

The link between the Bogomils and western "*Girovagi*"<sup>38</sup> was first admitted by the priest Cosma in his

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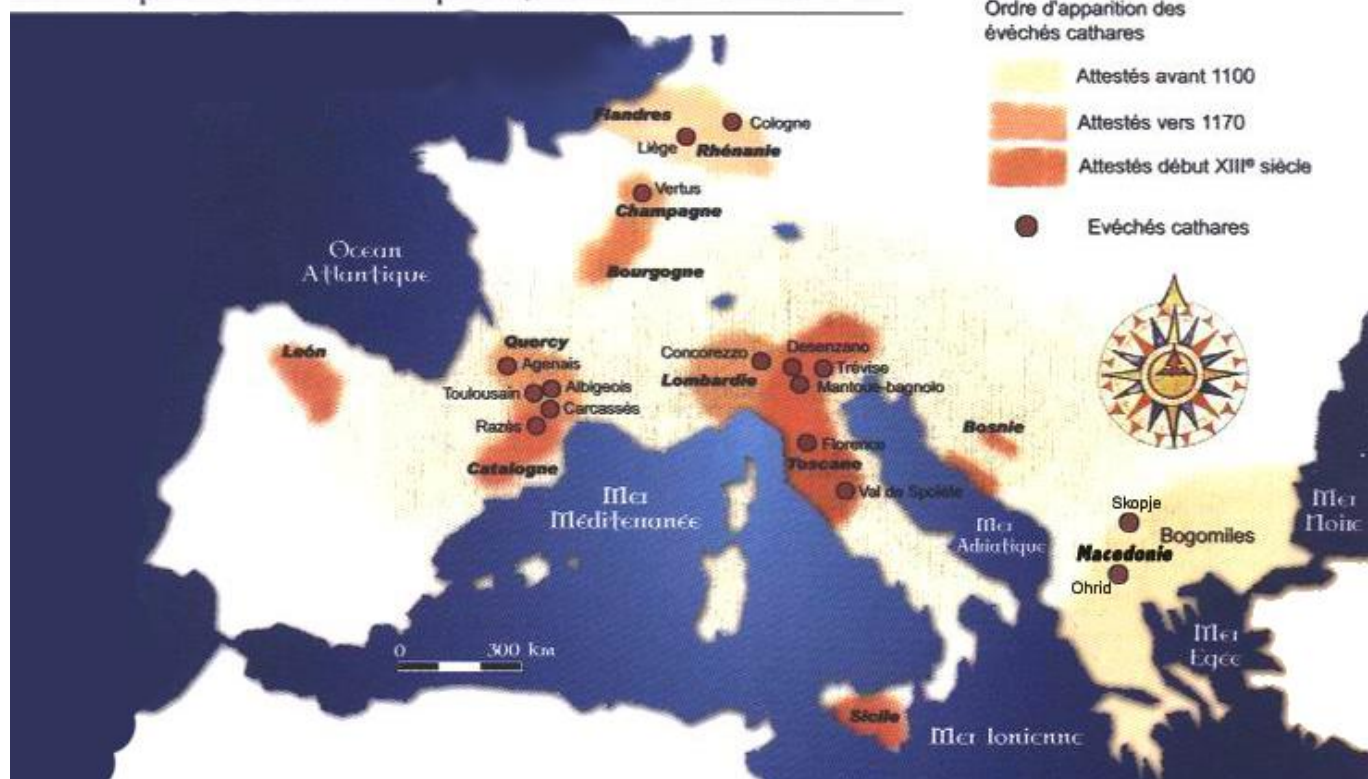
<sup>37</sup> Also *Dragometia*, *Draguwintia*, *Dragowitia* - region in Aegean Macedonia.

<sup>38</sup> 'Wanderers' in plain Italian; yet another name for Bogomils, Patarens, Cathars and the Albigenses, as they were wandering/escaping in front of the cruel persecutions by official medieval church institutions (i.e. Inquisition).



‘anti-heretic’ lecture with the aim of highlighting the “*parasitical aspects*” of the “perfecti”. This implies that an active part of the sect was anxious to proselytize and was continuously moving from one village to the next, both to ensure that they were not a burden on the same group of followers and to spread the Bogomil credo in a more capillary manner. An inference which is reinforced by the fact that many homonyms in Macedonia still echo the names and nicknames bestowed on the sect's followers by local people.

Les évêques cathares européens, mil. XII<sup>e</sup> s. - mil. XIII<sup>e</sup> s.



The diffusion of Bogomilism in Bosnia starting in the 11th century under the name ‘*Patarene faith*’ gives us a glimpse into future links with the west, underlined by the arrival of the first crusaders and their return overland. The fact that a number of orthodox opposers called the Catharist heresy “*Macedonic*” can also be seen as evidence of the influence of Bogomil rites on Catharist rites. In spite of the obvious efforts made to disguise it, the spread of the Bogomil faith cannot but have taken place by overland routes.<sup>39</sup>

Undoubtedly the power of Samoil’s state was largely due to the support of Bogomils. But, the acceptance and promotion of this popular dualist form of Christian religion by Samoil is one of the reasons why his empire has finally failed – Eastern Romeian and Western Roman church institutions made desperate efforts to extirpate the Bogomilism (and its western-European disciples Patharens, Cathars and Albigenses), which was condemned as heresy by both of them.

<sup>39</sup> "Overland Balkan Routes in the Middle Ages" by Fabrizio Vanni - Centro Studi Romei Firenze, p. 8,9. See also: "The Macedonian Genius Through The Centuries" by Giorgio Nurigiani, 1972. p.64,67,68.

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/81525243/The-Macedonian-Genius-Through-the-Centuries>

So, even though the Roman papacy (for geopolitical reasons) promoted the coronation of Tsar Samoil, and supported the Macedonian Archdiocese inauguration into Ecumenical Patriarchate, and beside all its Christianimosity against Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma - the Bogomilism wasn't condoned.



Above: **the island of Golem Grad ('Big City') in Lake Prespa, Macedonia. A medieval stronghold and Holy Sanctuary of the Bogomils, destroyed by the Crusaders in 1096**

In AD 995 under the jurisdiction of the Macedonian Apostolic Church, then situated both in Ohrid and Prilep, were the following eparchies: Prespa, Devol, Glavenitsa (Lat. *Cephalonia*), Iraklea (Lat. *Heraclea*, today Bitola), Morodvis, Meglen, Tiveriopol (Lat. *Tiberiopolis*, today Strumitsa), Ber (Lat. *Beroia*), Ser (Lat. *Serres*), Larisa, Navpact, Drač (Lat. *Dyrachium*), Skopje, Ulpiana (today Lipljan), Prizren, Ras, Srem (Lat. *Sirmium*), Belgrad, Braničevo, Vidin (i.e. Budin), Triade (or *Sredets*, today Sofia), Niš (Lat. *Naisus*), Velbužd, and Preslav. The Macedonian Apostolic Church reached the highest point in its 2-millennial existence, and through the newly elevated Patriarchate of Samoil de facto became the most powerful and influential church in the whole Macedonian Peninsula and further.

Further, the Macedonian Apostolic Church and the Samoil's Patriarchate of Ohrid was the source of Christianization of the Kievan Russia. Direst connections with Macedonia are confirmed also by prince Svyatoslav's mother relations, princess Olga (also the regent of Kievan Rus' for her son Svyatoslav from

945 until 960). She was the first Russian woman who converted to Christianity (done in either 945 or 957, officially in 955), and she did it in the Macedonian Jerusalem, in the holy see of Ohrid Patriarchate, in the cathedral of St. Sophia. She was baptized by the patriarch Timotej, and the Ohrid patriarch Nikolaj later baptized her nephew, prince Vladimir, in 987. The Russian prince Vladimir, in order to strengthen the relations with the then Macedonian Empire of Tsar Samoil married his Macedonian granddaughter Maria from Ohrid with whom he had two children, David and Roman. Later, their monastic names were Boris and Gleb, and they are the first Russian saints, today patrons of the Russian Army. Olga explicitly did this



in the holy see of Ohrid because the Macedonian church was founded by Apostle Paul, and was one of the four Apostolic churches – the one in Constantinople wasn't. Russian historian M.D. Priselkov (1881 - 1941) explains this:

*"She was a very shrewd diplomat, and in order to preserve the independence of Russia and to gain autonomy even in ecclesiastical affairs, she went and had been Christianized in Ohrid."* (Olga on the picture above)



Therefore, Kievan Russia received Christianity not from Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma (*Constantinople*), as claimed by modern politically biased historiography, but from the Apostolic Macedonian Archiepiscopacy of Ohrid, successor of Justiniana Prima. The Russian Church, according to Priselkov, was one of the eparchies of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy, and remained as such until 1037, when the treacherous clergy from Constantinople uncanonically imposed their (political) jurisdiction over the Archiepiscopacy of Ohrid. Princess Olga was later proclaimed as Saint by the Russian church, by the honorific title '*Istapóstolos*', actually a corrupted short form of "*Ista (na) Apostolot*" - 'equal (to the) Apostle' in plain Macedonian.

Priselkov's conclusions are sound and based on facts, one of which is that at the time of converting the Russians into Christianity, Russia had no firm and permanent ties with Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. Rather the opposite – they were at war.



Above: Romanov Imperial icon of St. Olga created in 1895, made with silver, gold, color enamel, tempera. Collection V. Logvinenko

M. Speranski explicitly underlines that in the first years of Christianity in Russia the Macedonic influence was the “*most fundamental*”, while M. G. Popruženko calls Ohrid Archiepiscopacy “*the pillar of the Orthodox Russia*”. For these undeniably strong ties between Macedonian and Russian churches, speaks the unmistakable evidence of the very first Metropolitan of Kiev, Michail, who was an ecclesiastic deputy sent from the Ohrid Patriarchate hierarchy. Accordingly, Russian church’s position was under the jurisdiction of Archdiocese Macedonia and the then Ohrid Patriarchate until 1037. Another big reason, underlined by Priselkov, is that the Christian teachings and unique Macedonic rite<sup>40</sup> adopted by the Russians were linguistically comprehensible and distinctly closer to Kievan people than those from Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. All of this was also made possible and huge merit of the Christian University of Plaošnik (the hill above Ohrid), founded by SS. Kliment (Lat. Clement) and Naum in the beginning of the 9th century. This was the first institution of studied theologians and But, the official suffragees of the modern politically-biased historiography are neglecting and intentionally hiding the historic facts, and are still pushing forward the politically agreed 19th century misleading version of the conventional history.



The growing and renewed power and the very independence of the Macedonian Apostolic Church, and the Tsar Samoil’s new Ecumenical Patriarchate in Ohrid, were finally challenged and cruelly suppressed by the Romeian emperor Basil II Porphyrogenitus (paradoxally - he too born Macedonian, from Adrianople). After almost 40 years of more or less intense warfare he finally managed to destroy the Samoil’s Macedonic Empire, reoccupy Macedonia, and put once again the Macedonian Apostolic Church with all its eparchies under direct control of the Holy See in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. But, surprisingly enough, again with almost total independence over its eparchies. After his victory Basil II was as moderate and sensible as he has been ruthless during the military campaign. Well, Macedonians were his kin after all.

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<sup>40</sup> "One thing is certain: the written language of Kievan Rus' was not based on any of the spoken languages or dialects of the inhabitants. In other words, it had no basis in any of the East Slavic dialects, nor did it stem from some supposed older form of Ukrainian, Belorussian or Russian. Rather, it was a literary language, known as "Old Slavonic", originally based on the dialects of Macedonia, an imported linguistic medium based on Old Macedonian", from "A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its Peoples" by Paul R. Magocsi, p. 107.



But, pogroms against Bogomils returned on the order of the day, and as a cause of the unprecedented brutality and persecutions by the official church institutions they dispersed further north and west across Europe...



Above: **the execution of the Bogomil priest Vasil (i.e. *Basil*) in Constantinople**

After the collapse of Macedonian state of Tsar Samoil's the Macedonian Patriarchate was reduced again into Archiepiscopacy, and the Macedonian Apostolic Church returned under direct ecumenical rule of the avtokrator and emperor Basil II Porphyrogenitus in the year of 1018. In that same year Basil reached the Macedonian Archiepiscopacy in Ohrid, where he received homage from Samoil's widow and other members of the family. Then the Romeian emperor issued three bulls to the Macedonian church in 1019, in May 1020, and between 1020 and 1025. Following the tradition and wise policy of his predecessor Justinian I the Great, he didn't suppress the jurisdiction of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy as expected. On contrary, as Macedonian himself, he re-confirmed to the Holy See in Ohrid the highest Patriarchate jurisdiction over its previous ecclesiastical provinces, thirty-one in total. And although he reduced the prelate's title from patriarch to archbishop, the then head of the Macedonic Patriarchate, Jovan Debarski (i.e. John of Debar), remained in office as Archbishop of Ohrid.

Beside the fact that he was a Macedonian too, this move of his was again due to the already mentioned Christianimosity and ecclesiastic rivalry between the old Rome and Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. Roman Papacy failed once again to reach higher point of its interests in the Macedonian Peninsula and to take back reclaimed possessions by seemingly supporting Macedonian independency. The Romeian emperor stance in supporting and confirming the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy privileged and independent status was clearly directed against the Roman Papacy meddling into Eastern Ecumenical Congregation spheres

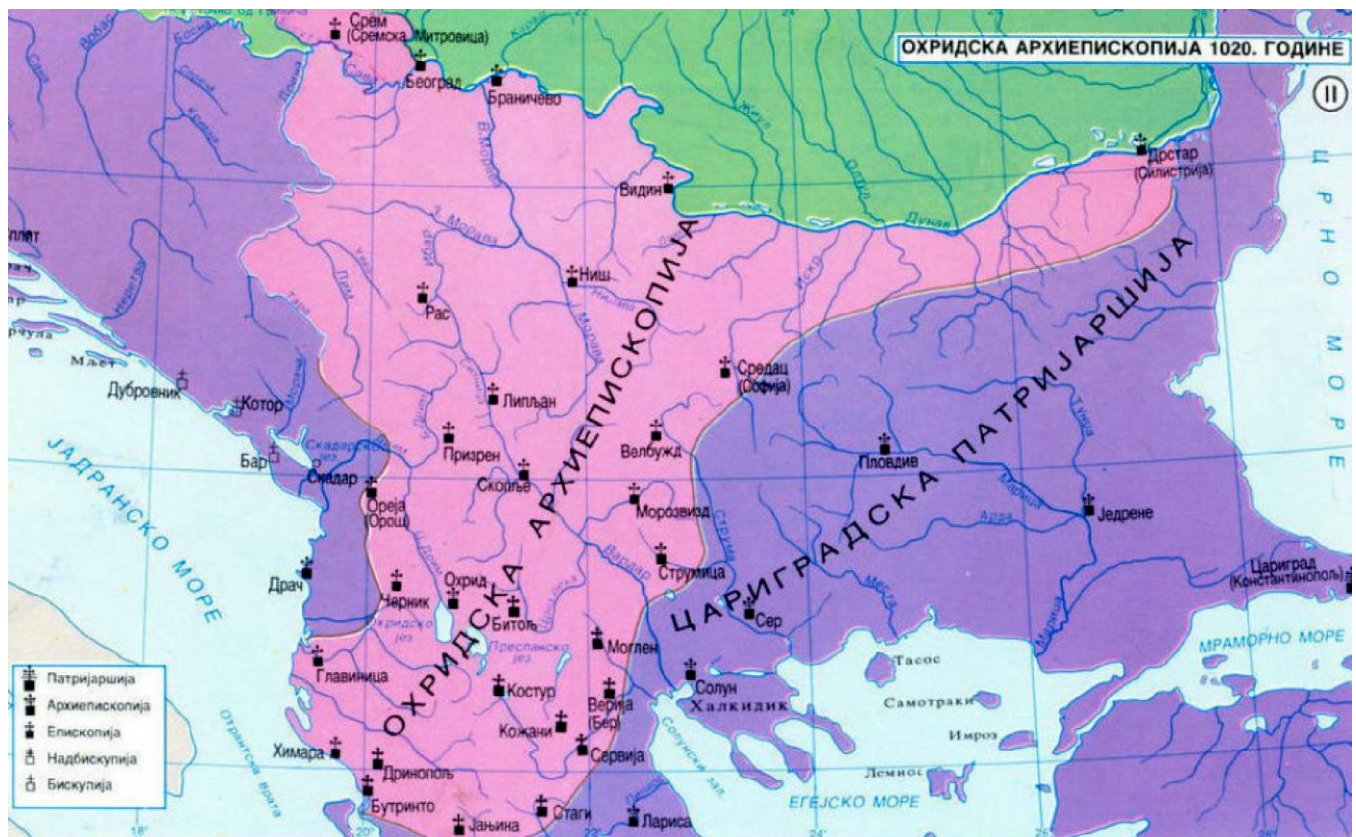


of interest. Instead of creating new unnecessary frictions with the Macedonic Christian community, Basil II pleased the Macedonian bishops and numerous eparchies by reconfirming their ecclesiastic positions under his imperial aegis. In the Bull of 1019 issued by Basil II Porphyrogenitus, 17 eparchies of Ohrid Archbishopric were listed. With each Episcopal See, towns under its jurisdiction were listed and the number of clerics and parishioners written down. In the second imperial Bull to the Archdiocese of Ohrid, another 14 eparchies were added to the list, thus totaling 31, including:

1. Ohrid-Prespa eparchy (Archiepiscopal Holy See) with Kičevo, Prespa, Mala Prespa (ex-Holy See of the Ohrid Patriarchate) and Mokra;
2. Kostur eparchy;
3. Vutron eparchy in southern Arbania (or Arvania, today *Albania*)<sup>41</sup>;
4. Irakliska (*Bitola*) eparchy with Pelagonia, Prilep (ex-Holy See of Ohrid Patriarchate), Veles and Debar;
5. Meglenska eparchy with Prosek and Mariovo;
6. Strumička eparchy with Radoviš and Konče;
7. Morodvis (Bregalnička) eparchy with Kozjak, Slavište, Zletovo, Maleševo and Štip (lat. *Astibo*);
8. Velbužd (today *Kyustendil*) eparchy;
9. Sredec (today *Sofia*) eparchy;
10. Niš (lat. *Naisus*) eparchy;
11. Branicevska eparchy along the Morava valley with Smederevo;
12. Belgrade (lat. *Singidunum*) eparchy;
13. Srem (lat. *Sirmium*) eparchy;
14. Skopje (lat. *Scupensis/Scopis*) eparchy with Bineč, Lukovo, Preamor and Princip;
15. Prizren (lat. *Prisdiana*) eparchy with Polog and Leskovec;
16. Lipljan eparchy (lat. *Ulpiana*, i.e. *Justiniana Secunda*) with Kosovo Pole;
17. Ras (*Raška*) eparchy;
18. Belgrade (today *Berat* in Albania) eparchy in *Nova Epirus*;
19. Vidin (i.e. Budin) eparchy;
20. Kozil eparchy;
21. Orosh eparchy west of Prizren;
22. Drinopole eparchy in Arbania with Argirocastro;
23. Imerska eparchy in Arbania north of Corfu;
24. Glavenička eparchy with Devol and Kutmichevitsa;
25. Janinska (*Ioanina*) eparchy in Epirus;
26. Stash eparchy in Thessalia;
27. Velš eparchy south of Drinopole;
28. Servitsa (Selfidže) eparchy southwest of Solun (*Thessalonika*);
29. Ber eparchy west of Solun (*Thessalonika*);
30. D'rstar (Silistra) eparchy with Tarnovo in what is now northern Bulgaria;
31. Chernička eparchy with *Dyrrachium* (today *Dürres*), with the last episcopate of Durrës under the auspices of Ohrid Archdiocese mentioned in the year 1280.

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<sup>41</sup> The original name for the today so-called "*Albania*", still preserved in Greek and Turkish as *Arvanites* and *Arvanutluk* respectively, due to the lack of the consonant letter for "b" in Greek alphabet; from "*Arabat*" - mercenary.



Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva iz Beograda 2006. je objavio Istorijski atlas koji je potpisalo 12 srpskih naučnika, među kojima i neki akademici SANU. I prije raskola (1054) Duklja je pod jurisdikcijom Rimske crkve

Above and on the next page: the maps that show ecclesiastical domain of Ohrid Archbishopcy with the main episcopal sees under its jurisdiction in X and at the beginning of XI century







## **Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy between the Crusades and the emergence of the new nations**

The late Middle Ages in Macedonia were evident by more warring, crisis, and more foreign invasions. The gradual decline of the Holy Roman Empire, and consequently of the Macedonian Apostolic Church, was long lasting but unrelenting process. The 13-14 centuries collapse of Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma was caused by many terms, but mainly from the fermenting and unstoppable rise of the new eastern and western powers - the Mongolic Golden Horde, the Islamic Mohammedans, and the new Roman Holy Empire respectively. The difference of the last two from the respective previous Persian and Roman empires was enormous. In the east the Crescent was gaining more and more religious, military and political power, annihilating on its way all the previous religions and kingdoms by, let's say it again - the brute force of sword and fire. Islam rising and advance was largely on the expense of the Roman Empire territory. In the west the Roman papacy have found a new powerful ally in the newly formed Frankish kingdom, which, through the brute force of sword and fire, will later become the powerful Holy Roman Empire. In an attempt to unite western Christendom under one rule, with the coronation of Charlemagne as emperor in the year 800, Rome had found a powerful ally. At its height the territory of this 9th-century brand new "Holy Roman Empire" included *Germany*, *German "Oster-reich"* (i.e. "Eastern-kingdom", today *Austria*), *Switzerland*, and parts of Italy and the Netherlands.

Another big issue that caused the inevitable collapse of the Roman Empire was the absence of universal linguistic factor. The Orthodox Church acted as the sole focus of distinctive collective identity, but, the very important Macedonic linguistic character of the Macedonic Christian communities was neglected. Administrative Latin and other non-vernacular mediums were equally refuted by the large majority of the popular masses. What the wise emperors like Justinian I, Michael and Basil II Porphyrogenitus of Macedonian dynasties have clearly foreseen about the Macedonic rite, language and script, has been lost out of sight during the Komnenos dynasty. Unfortunately, they missed the support of the majority of the population by never realizing that the administrative Latin and Septuagint Koine were not the mediums by which the could common people hear and understand Word of God.

Then came the Crusades, a series of medieval wars, instigated by the Roman-catholic church for alleged religious ends. In that moment Europe, and particularly western Medieval Europe, was a terrifyingly violent place. Physical force was used to achieve all sorts of ends. Feudalists and church used violence to exert their cruel power over their subjects and to pursue feuds among each other for political, financial, and territorial gain. The only way they could maintain this status, both as individuals and as a group, wasn't through cultural or peaceful means, but, the perpetual violence and war. Thus, with the excuse to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims, Roman Catholic Church redirected the backwatered western Europe crude violence toward civilized southeastern Europe and Asia Minor, and provoked a series of religious wars in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries.

Crusades had devastating effect on the Macedonian Peninsula. Passing-by western armies and bashibouzuks pillaged and marauded along their way to Asia Minor. Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma after centuries of warring in the east and northeast had no more strength to withstand the both invasions from east and west. Thus, the Fourth Crusade ended with the conquest of Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma, the very center of Orthodoxy, in April of 1204. The barbaric Tungri<sup>42</sup> kings, pressing in on

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<sup>42</sup> The real pre-Latin name of the *Franks* and *Germans*.

weakening Romeian Empire, were still depicted on coins and in frescoes wearing Constantinople robes, with inscriptions in Romeian Septuagint Koine lettering. The resulting political and territorial disintegration of the Romeian Empire was the dire consequence, which was actually one of the main reasons for Rome to instigate these wars. Crusaders founded a Latin kingdom with capital in occupied Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. In the following period Nicaea, which became the seat of the Patriarch of Constantinople (in exile until 1261), fulfilled the role of Ecumenical Holy See. Romeian Empire beside its sovereignty lost the firm hold on the Macedonian Peninsula too, and separatist divisions ensued, and the decline of Constantinople reflected into further decline of the Macedonian Apostolic Church as well.

Following the general decline of Constantinople power new statelets started to pop-up all over the Macedonian Peninsula. In eastern Macedonian Peninsula in 1175 the Wallachian king Ivan Asen founded the Second Bulgar Empire. In 1185 he even established an independent new Bulgaro-Vlachian church in Tarnovo. The Second Bulgar-Wallachian empire occupied also parts of Macedonia, but nevertheless it left the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy to act independently, only by reducing its jurisdiction on behalf of the newly founded Tarnovo Archiepiscopacy. The Bulgaro-Vlachian archbishop installed by Ivan Asen then expelled all the Macedonian bishops and in their place promoted others which he himself ordained. But, the Bulgaro-Vlachian empire didn't lasted much longer either, and after the death of king Kaloyan in 1207 it gradually declined and disappeared.



In Prosek<sup>43</sup>, Macedonia, the Sevastokrat<sup>44</sup> Strez also founded a kingdom, and managed to unify the neighboring Macedonian towns, including Ohrid. Ohrid Archiepiscopacy then, already much reduced from initial Macedonian Archdiocese, extended only to the territory of Strez kingdom. However, it remained free from the pressure of emerging Tarnovo Archiepiscopacy. Strez interests and faith coincided with that of the Ohrid Archbishop, in their efforts to preserve the independence of the principality and

<sup>43</sup> Also known as *Stena* in the ancient times, today Demir Kapia.

<sup>44</sup> “All-ruling” - from ‘Vse-vasto-krator’, i.e. *all(mighty)-of everything-ruler* in plain Old Church Macedonic; see also “Avtokrator” (Anglicized: *Autocrat*); and *Sevastopol*, a city in Russia.

the Macedonian Archdiocese. During the reign of Strez, the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy managed to restore some of its eparchies, which were previously taken by the new separatist Tarnovo Archiepiscopacy of Ivan Asen. This schismatic new Bulgaro-Vlachian church that was established in 1185 was abolished in 1393.

After the death of Strez (in 1215) his kingdom was divided too. The Macedonian Archdiocese also found itself divided again by new frontiers - between the newly Latinized by the crusaders Solun Archiepiscopacy and Epirus Despotate. Then Ohrid Archiepiscopacy lost its southern Macedonian eparchies of Meglen and Strumitsa. At this time began the bitter struggle between the corrupted Latinized bishops from Solun and Macedonians. In Ohrid was convened the Assembly of Bishops under the presidency of Archbishop Homatian. At the head of the Macedonian group was the episcopo from Meglen, and at the head of Solun group stood the episcopo from Voden.<sup>45</sup> A dispute arose concerning the recognition of the rank of those bishops who were appointed by the Bulgaro-Wallachian king Kaloyan the. After the intervention of Todor Komnen Duka (Latin: *Theodore Komnenus Doukas*) a compromise was reached: bishops from Solun appointed by Kaloyan were to leave the episcopacies, and in their place the returning of local bishops from Macedonia was ordered.



Thus, the larger part of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy with Ohrid fell under the rule of the Epirus Despotate of Todor Komnen Duka, and under his protection Macedonian Apostolic Church managed again to return some of the eparchies that were previously seized. The Despotate was centered in the region of Epir (Lat. *Epirus*), encompassing also Matia and the western portion of Lower Macedonia, and also

<sup>45</sup> cities in Aegean Macedonia.



included Thessaly and Peloponessus as far south as Nafpaktos. Epirus Despotate seized even Solun, and thanks to it and despite all the misfortunes, Macedonian Apostolic Church retained its ecclesiastic dominant position in the Macedonian Peninsula and managed again to extend its jurisdiction by taking back Skopje, Serres and Ras (i.e. *Servia*) eparchies. But, with the overall weakening of the Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma and the Ecumenical Patriarchate authority due to the Crusader Wars, many local rulers and feudal upstarts saw their opportunity for plunder and seizing whatever they could seize. But, for legalizing their deeds they needed ecclesiastic approval from somewhere or someone, and any official church might've be good enough for their feudal possessions to gain legal stronghold. So they non-canonically created their own ones. Thus, the most strongly condemned *Ethnophyletism*, a heresy which claims that the church should be along national (ethnic) lines in the same geographical area, started to expand across the Macedonian Peninsula.

Sava, the youngest son of the Rascian despot Stephan Nemanja, provides the next blatant illustration of the devastating impact that the Crusades had on the Orthodox Church communities unity in the Macedonian Peninsula and Asia Minor. As a Macedonian Church monk<sup>46</sup> on Mt. Athos, in 1218 Sava suddenly went to Nicaea in Asia Minor, and profiting from the dire political conditions of the Romeian Empire he reached (for certain amount of gold) an agreement with the then financially and politically ruined Romeian patriarch and emperor Manuel I Komnenos. With this transaction, he illegally and non-canonically circumvented his superior, the Archbishop of Ohrid, and from common deacon became the 'Archbishop' of the non-canonical "Rascia's autonomous church". Here's the condemning letter of the then Archbishop of Ohrid, Homatian (to Sava):

*"... If you're emplaced as for 'Bishop', it is ours, and we think rightfully, to ask: How and of which church? In that we are ordered with the divine guidance of sacred canons and pious instructions. If you blessed now became a Bishop, as I hear by gossips from all sides, we want to know where. If it is in Rascia we ask how? If it is the holiest Patriarch of Constantinople, we wonder what's the use? Because if you become bishop on the basis of the right of former emperors to rebuild cities, and then from lower deacon, to erase in higher bishop or metropolitan, as defined in Canons 12 and 17 of Chalcedonian Council and the 38th Canon of the Council in Trullo which met the royal court, then you should be a bishop before yielding to get higher. And you've been nor bishop, nor do you have a royal decision, which would have confirmed your ordination. And where is today the kingdom which has this dignity, now that many have power over different areas, but no one has preserved intact the royal dignity? And since there's no real kingdom, then your ordination lacks legal basis too.*

*1218, Ohrid"*

Despite the protests of the Ohrid Archbishop, religious separatist Sava began to organize its illegal "autocephalous" church. For the 9 breakaway Macedonian eparchies he ordained 9 bishops, mainly brought from Mt. Athos. This very same non-canonical "Serbian Orthodox Church" (SPC), beside its illegal creation, today has even the face to question and deny the very inherence of the incomparably older Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. By giving non-canonical out-of-the-hat inherencies to different newly arranged regional churches, Ecumenical Patriarchate in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma undermined the overall hierarchy and trust among the Eastern Orthodox institutions and communities. Once powerful and independent as the center of Orthodox Christianity, with actions like this Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma lost its basic direction in managing the ecclesiastic affairs and hierarchy among the subordinate churches within its domain. This state of confusion, where the newly created religious-separatist political churches (Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian, Serbian...) didn't

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<sup>46</sup> Deacon under jurisdiction of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy.

recognize the authority of the older Archbishoprics, have caused ulterior chaos and impossibility of organizing the all-churches Ecumenical Holy Synod since 1351. Dividing the once united orthodox church along the new national boundaries erode the very essence and meaning of the original Christian credo.

The above mentioned example of unsanctioned SPC ethnophyletism and proselytism is totally opposite to the principles of the Christian Law which clearly states: *“The Bishops of every nation need to know the first one among them, and to consider him the head, and not to do anything without his knowing, but everyone of them should do just that which considers their eparchy and its region. But also the head of all the bishops shouldn’t do anything without the knowledge of everybody else (of the bishops). Because only in that way there could be understanding and glorifying of God, through Jesus Christ, in the spirit of Father-the Son-and the Holy Spirit”* - the 34. Apostolic Canon. Almost all the factions, schisms and religious wars between the different churches and other religions were and are provoked by breaking this sacred law. When there is no order of succession (like in the case of separatist churches of Albania, Bulgaria, Grease, Romania, Servia, etc.) and due respect for the elder churches - treason and destruction are on the order of the day...

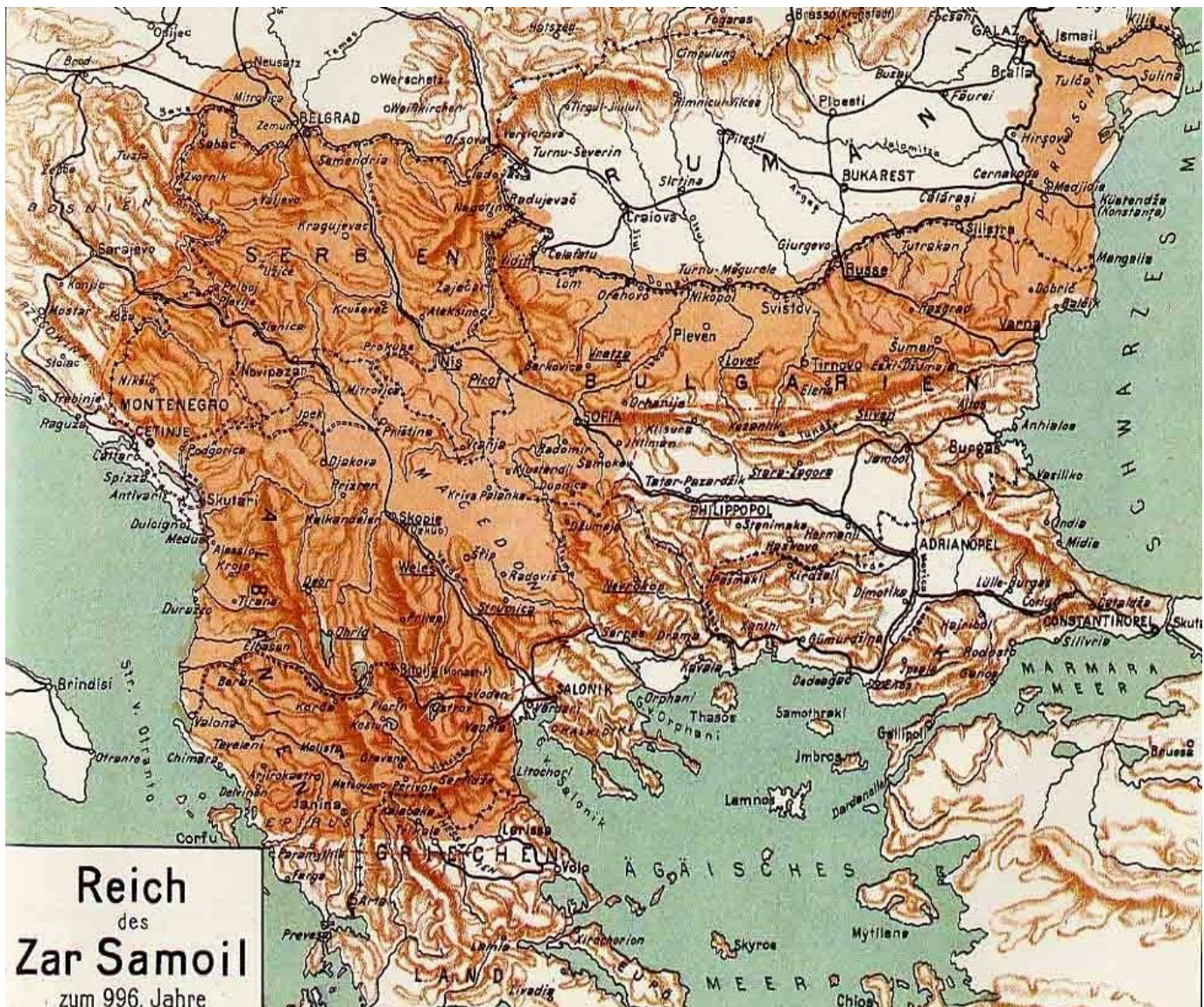
Later, when the (Servian) state of Rascia was officially created it expanded toward south, and inevitably some eparchies of Macedonian Apostolic Church were placed under the jurisdiction of the new (Servian)



Orthodox Church. Thus, when later king Stefan Dushan reigned over the whole territory of Macedonia, his kingdom had two autonomous Archbishoprics - of Ohrid and Peć. Soon Dushan decided to proclaim



himself Tsar (i.e. emperor). And according to church canons, the imperial crown could only be received by Patriarch. The 10th century Macedonian Patriarchate of Ohrid lost its rank in the beginning of the 11th, therefore, for crowning Dushan into Tsar it was necessary for one of the now Serbian church to be declared a Patriarchate. In 1346 a Council was held in Skopje fortress Kale, where Peć archbishop Joannicius II in the presence of the Archbishops of Ohrid and Tarnovo was named Patriarch of the Servian Orthodox Church, and thenafter from his hands Dushan received the imperial Macedonian crown. Why Macedonian? Because with this title, as a Macedonian Tsar, Dušan was aiming to take over the same territorial, imperial and ecumenical inherences that were under aegis of the previous Macedonian Tsar, Samoil. His relative family relations with Jovan Vladimir of Duklja (Lat. *Diocleia*), who earlier married the Samoil's daughter, only eased his way through institutional labyrinths for legalizing the whole enterprise. Namely, his wife was the grandniece of Samoil's daughter.



Above and on the next page: maps that show the respective empires of Tsar Samoil (963-1018) and Tsar Stefan Dushan (1350)





Patriarch Callistus I of Constantinople immediately issued an act of condemnation and excommunication both of Tsar Stefan Dušan and non-canonical Servian patriarch Joanikije in 1350. However, Ohrid

Archiepiscopacy/Patriarchy during the rule of Tsar Stefan Dušan remained fully independent. This probably happened as a kind of reward for the support that Macedonian Apostolic Church gave to Dushan in his coronation. Archbishop was no longer appointed by the king but was elected by the bishops he appointed without interference from the state authorities. Macedonian Archdiocese in Ohrid continued to be a spiritual and cultural center for the Macedonians, which actually made up her whole flock. Dushan behaved correctly and respectfully towards the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. Any changes in the Serbian state and church were approved with the participation and blessing of the Macedonian Archiepiscopacy. At that time the Macedonian Apostolic Church was also in good financial position. Dushan and his successors, as a new political power in Macedonia, helped the Macedonian Archdiocese, and at that time many churches and monasteries on its territory were built and restored.

The jurisdiction of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy after the dissolution of Dushan's kingdom was reduced again between several principalities, including the kingdom of Volkashin, who was welcomed at the headquarters of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. King Volkashin, followed by his son Marko, fully respected the authority and autocephaly of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. Accordingly, even if largely reduced, the Macedonian Apostolic Church was the only ecclesiastical authority in the Macedonia of Volkashin. And the Archiepiscopacies of Ohrid and Prilep, as well as the kings, relied upon the ethnographic unity of the Macedonian people.

In Volkashin time the Macedonian Apostolic Church was on the rise in every respect and expanded territorially. To Ohrid Archiepiscopacy were very closely connected the episcopacies of Skopje, Kičevo and Prizren. Macedonian medieval literacy at this time reached its highest development and influence on the cultural and social life. There were two kinds of ecclesiastic literacy schools - *Enoric* ('of the churchyards') and *Monastic* (of the Monasteries). Of many priests and literates from this time, that left to us their works and manuscripts, among others we have the records of: priest Grdo from St. George monastery (in Vintse near Kumanovo, R. of Macedonia), his disciple the priest Nikola Brata, Oliver Prilepski, the deacon Gregoriy 'Shepherd' Akadin (from Prilep too), the deacon Dabiša, anagnost (i.e. *literate*) Radin, Voihna, Nestor, Stanislav Lesnovski, the monk Nikodim Ohridski, Parteniy, Kalinik, the monk Ioan, the monk Teophil, the metropolitan Iakov (i.e. *Jacob*), Isaiah Serski, hieromonk Mihail, monk Ravul, deacon Dobre Radev, Dimitar Zograf, Arseniy Solunski, deacon Stefan Skopski, Nikola Prilepski-Tismanski, etc.



## **Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archbishopcy during the occupation of Seljuk Turks**



Then in the 14th century came the Turkish invasion. In the last years of the 14th century almost all Macedonia had fallen under Turkish rule, and in 1408 Turks had taken over the Holy See of the autocephalous Macedonian Apostolic Church. Holy See in Ohrid found itself under the Turkish yoke. Nevertheless, the Turks respected the Macedonian Holy See and its apostolic Christian authority. And despite this new foreign occupation Macedonian Apostolic Church expanded again its jurisdiction. However, it suffered great material damage from the Turks. The conquest of Macedonia was accompanied by devastation of towns and villages and looting of Christian properties. Due to the displacement of population episcopacies lost revenue and they got impoverished. There was a massive Islamization of the Macedonians, especially around Polog and Prizren at the confluence of the rivers Drin and Radika. Whole villages converted to Islam in Macedonia.

At the beginning of the 15th century Bulgar Tarnovo Patriarchy disappeared, and Sofia (former Serditsa) and Vidin eparchies had been returned under jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archbishopcy. Ohrid archbishop Matey done this by presenting the Ecumenical Bulls of the previous Romeian emperors to the then emperor Manuel Paleolog (Lat. *Paleologus*), in which were underlined the privileges and jurisdiction of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archbishopcy over these eparchies. In the middle of the same century Wallachia and Moldavia also found themselves under jurisdiction of the Ohrid



Archiepiscopacy. Actually in 1452 or 1453 on demand of the Moldavian prince Alexandrel the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy sends the archimandrite Nikodim Prilepski (i.e. from Prilep, Macedonia) who later inaugurated the episcopate Teoxit for Moldavian Metropolitan. Even some orthodox communities in Italy and Dalmatia were under jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy.

Then again the relations between the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy and the Constantinople Ecumenical Patriarchy worsened in 1439, when decadent Constantinople Patriarchy entered in desperate union with the schismatic Roman-Catholic church. Macedonian Apostolic church stood firmly against this treacherous political union.

After the death of Servian patriarch Arsenije II in 1463, there was no successor elected. Thus, the non-canonical Peč Patriarchate was abolished too, and these church eparchies returned again under the jurisdiction of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. As Ivan Snegarov has pointed out, the Holy Church of Ohrid expanded its territory significantly as a result of the major power shift in mid-fourteenth century Macedonian Peninsula owing to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. There is a record of a few instances in the period prior to the Ottoman conquests, when the Archbishopric of Ohrid suffered significant jurisdictional losses due to its rivalry with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. With the support of Constantinople, the Patriarchate of Tarnovo was also formed at the end of the 12th century, thus limiting the territory of Ohrid to the Western part of the newly born Bulgar kingdom. Around the same time, Constantinople also created more divisions by encouraging few Servian eparchies to separate from Ohrid, thus, contrary to the sacred rules of Christianity, opening the door for the new “Servian” church to become independent by the second decade of the 13th century. However, the instability and jurisdiction decline in which the Ohrid Archbishopric found itself in the 12th and 13th centuries was somewhat mitigated when the Ottomans conquered some of the territories under the jurisdiction of Ohrid, including the main city in the 1380s. The reasons behind the Ottoman support of the Archbishopric of Ohrid are not very clear, particularly if we take into consideration that the Ottomans had abolished the Patriarchate of Tarnovo in 1393, and had significantly limited the power of the Servian church by returning some of its important eparchies to Ohrid. Most probably they respected the will of the very people from the occupied territories. According to Matkovski, the territorial growth of Ohrid in the 1st century of Ottoman rule could be explained with reference to *“the traditional diplomatic efforts of the church leaders who knew how to present themselves to the new Turkish authorities in opposition to Constantinople – which was not yet conquered by the Turks at that time – as this patriarchate often contested the independence of Ohrid and limited the previously granted rights”*. It should not be underestimated, Matkovski holds, that the territories under Ohrid ecclesiastic jurisdiction were *“mainly in Epirus and along the valley of river Vardar, precisely in direction of (the Ottoman plans for) expansion”*. Another important event, which could have made Ohrid a trustworthy partner of the Ottomans, Matkovski adds, is that this church decisively rejected the ‘Decree of Union’ signed on the 6th of July 1439 in Florence, which for a short time ended the East-West Schism. Apart from disputed doctrines between Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople on one side, and Rome on the other, such as the doctrine on Purgatory, the Procession of the Holy Spirit, and the Sacramental Bread, it should be noted that the Council of Florence was appointed in the wake of the rise of Ottoman power. The Constantinople leaders proposed union with the Latin Church primarily because they expected military support from the West in order to defend Constantinople from the Ottomans. Although this short lived East-West Union was rejected by many priests in the East, the Ottoman Sultans did consider it a threat. The Patriarchs of Constantinople appointed after the fall of the Romeian Empire were by rule necessarily anti-unionists.

Hagiographical works composed and written by Dimitar Kantakuzin and Vladislav Gramatik in the second half of the 15th century (dedicated to St. Jovan Rilski and the translation of his relics from VelikoTarnovo

to Rila Monastery) are in the context of the canonisation of Jovan of Rila in the 1470s, both accounts include a narrative about the Ottoman conquests of South-eastern Europe in the late 14th century and the resulting fall of the Bulgar and Servian kingdoms. In the “Syntagma of Matthew Blastares” written by deacon Dimitar of Kratovo in 1466, he summarizes the interference of the Turkish sultan in the Macedonian church affairs by ordering replacement of Dorotej, and bringing Marko (known as Patriarch Mark II Xylocaraves of Constantinople), to be head of the Church in Ohrid.

With the complete fall of the Macedonian Peninsula under Turkish rule, within the Turkish borders then were enclosed two more or less independent Orthodox Churches: the Constantinople Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. Ohrid archbishops could still help their communities, but the Macedonian Archdiocese was forced to pay huge taxes. From that time the Macedonian Apostolic Church remembers its Archbishop Prohor (1523-1543). Nevertheless, an important patriarchic bull (holy edict) from September 1530 testifies the importance of autochthonous autocephalous



Above: the 15th century Macedonian city depicted by Hartmann Schedel

status of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy/Patriarchate. It was issued by the 4 Eastern Patriarchs of the Holy Apostolic churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, and Jerusalem. This important document and



testimony of the Ohrid Archbishopric, that was signed by the 4 supreme Eastern Patriarchs on September 1530. In the holy letter from Alexandrian patriarch Joakim, Antiochian Michael, Jerusalem's Joseph, and Constantinople's Jeremiah addressed to Ohrid Archbishop Prohor, they underline the factual hierarchy, hierocracy and ecclesiastic order, in which "*there is no recognized 'Autocephalous' Servian church*". Nor that of the so-called "St. Sava" from 1219, nor the one constituted by Stefan Nemanjić in 1346. The fact that Ipex patriarchate (Peć patriarchate)<sup>47</sup> and its diocese was never officially recognized by any church institution proves the decision of the supreme holy synod of 4 eastern patriarchs of the Holy Church from September 1530.<sup>48</sup> In this edict the decision of the Holy Synod states:

*"Because since ancient times there have been royal decrees that confirm that the diocese of Ipex (i.e. Peć), as well as Servia, belong to the Ohrid Archdiocese, and according to the content of the mentioned decrees, the holy synod decides and declares that Ipex and the entire province of Servia are under the jurisdiction and authority of the holy Ohrid Archdiocese, as it has been from the beginning until now. And whoever from now on tries to do some dirty deeds for their sake, whoever he may be, will be excommunicated by the almighty god, etc."*

In the 2nd half of the 16th century Macedonian Apostolic Church once again began to intensively lose territories under its jurisdiction. In 1557 under the sultan Suleiman II the once abolished non-canonical Servian Patriarchate was restored, thanks to the mediation of Turkish pasha<sup>49</sup> Mehmed Sokolović, who was Serb by birth. His cousin, one of the bishops under jurisdiction of Macedonian Archdiocese, Makarije Sokolović, was installed as the new (non-canonical) patriarch in Peć. The Turks reinstated the Servian Church, which then again grabbed some eparchies from the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy in western Bulgaria. At the same time the jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy was further restricted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople (i.e. Istanbul). The Patriarchate was eager to restore its authority over the whole Macedonian Peninsula and to diminish the power of the Macedonian Apostolic Church by illegally giving the ecclesiastic jurisdictions to different eparchies in the hands of the newly non-canonically created national-political churches.



Above: **SERVIA** from 1690 map of Vincenzo Maria Coronelli

But, that wasn't all. Due to the brutal Turk oppression and slaughter many Macedonic communities migrated toward north, and together with their hierarchs refuged to Austro-Hungary, where they had been granted autonomy in the border region of Vojvodina. Then, under the auspices of Habsburg Monarchy, in

<sup>47</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serbian\\_Patriarchate\\_of\\_Pe%C4%87](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serbian_Patriarchate_of_Pe%C4%87)

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/Angjele.Blazhev/videos/837434110807356>

<sup>49</sup> Pasha - 'prince' in plain Turkish.



1708, another autonomous and non-canonical Serbian Orthodox Exarchate church<sup>50</sup> of Sremski Karlovci was created. Nonetheless, Turks promptly responded to the creation of this political Serbian Exarchate in Sremski Karlovci by permitting the creation of yet another, third Serbian Episcopacy in Belgrad. Thus, the incessant 18-19th centuries belligerent confrontation between Ottoman Empire,



Austro-Hungary and Russia resulted into overnight appearance of many purely political churches and tribes, that started to emerge rapidly across the whole Macedonian Peninsula.

The Ottomans finally and officially (once again!) abolished the non-canonical Servian Church in 1766. And due to numerous uprisings against the Turkish occupying forces in Macedonian Peninsula, in which the church had a leading role, and under cunning accusations from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople/Istanbul, the very next year (1767) they abolished also the Bulgar church in Trnovo, and, even the autocephalous Macedonian Apostolic Church in Ohrid. The overall church jurisdiction of Macedonian Peninsula was taken and passed under the apostate and treacherous Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople/Istanbul.

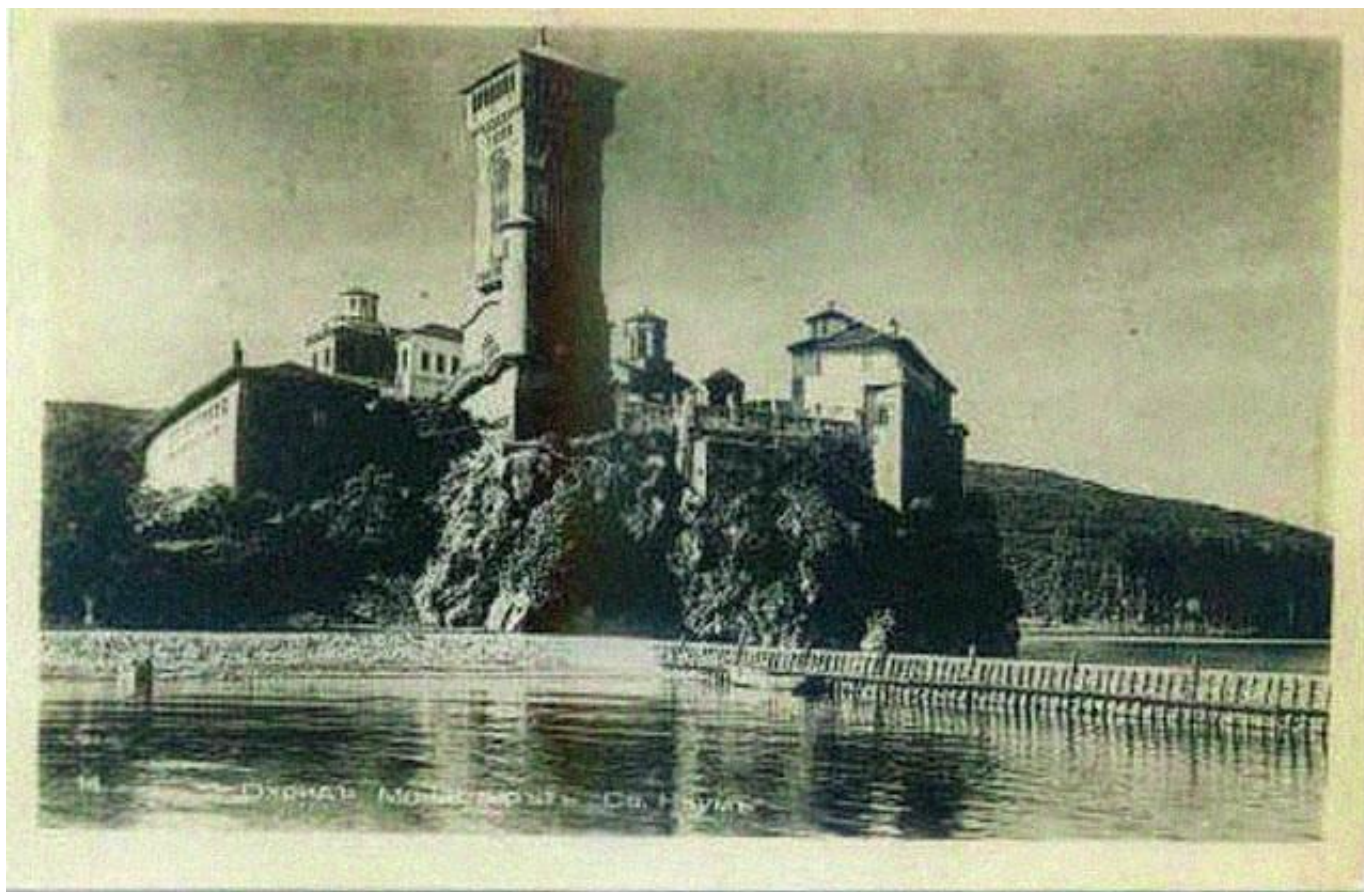
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<sup>50</sup> *Exarchate* - an extraterritorial church, in exile.



But, the Macedonian Apostolic Church, even if illegally spoiled from the administrative jurisdiction over its eparchies (as the Turkish Sultan had no ecclesiastic authority whatsoever over the autocephalous church institutions) - didn't perish. It continued to perform the holy apostolic teachings among its Macedonian flock without hesitation. Macedonian clergy organized itself in local Church Schools, outside of the schismatic Ecumenical Patriarchate reach. This harsh situation of the Macedonian people, as well as the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy, continued until the end of 18th century.





Macedonian national revival in modern times began, as was the case with many other peoples, in the early 19th century, formally with the publication of the 1st book in modern Macedonian (1814). This process developed steadily but was impaired by frequent disturbances, which wasn't the result of internal development processes, but mostly, as in the past two millenniums - the consequence of strong and diverse foreign interferences. The difficult economic situation in that moment compelled the Ohrid archbishops and their bishops to turn to western Europe and from there to seek financial assistance. But, this desperate move turned again to be the backfire blow. In 1858 until 1860 the Roman-catholic church used this situation once again to return with their incessant attempts to regain the former influence and authority over Macedonia. This time through the new "Uniat church", which retains its own eastern-orthodox liturgy, but acknowledges papal supremacy. Sponsored by the western powers and Vatican, numerous Uniat schools were opened across the Macedonian cities, and because the scholastic program was in Macedonian language they attracted a great number of students.

Thenafter, in the 19th century, the Turkish-created and then abolished Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade was officially re-established once again, and proclaimed independent (?), and even became "autocephalous" (it is not known how and by which religion canonical rules) in 1879, one year after the *ex-patria* recognition of Serbia Pashaluk ('*Principality*' in Turkish) as an independent state by the Great Powers. Its non-canonical church was then entitled as the "Metropolitanate of Belgrade". And, at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century two separate non-canonical Serbian Churches still existed - the Austro-Hungarian homemade "Serbian Church" of Sremski Karlovci within the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Turkish-made, then abolished, and then again remade "Archiepiscopacy of Belgrade" in the then 'Pashaluk of Serbia'. Thus, the small-change imperialistic policies of the western



powers, and the decline of the Ottoman empire, reflected in the creation of number of various-political and non-canonical separatist churches in the Macedonian Peninsula.



Political situation in 1848:

- - Proclaimed borders of Voivodina within Austrian Empire
- - Military Frontier within Austrian Empire
- - other Austrian territories
- - Principality of Serbia within Ottoman Empire, existed with these borders from 1833 to 1878
- - other Ottoman territories

Above: Sremski Karlovci, the very birth place of Servian Pashaluk (Principality) within the boundaries of Turkish empire

Ottoman rule in the consciousness of the Macedonian people is observed as Martyrs period. Many Christians who refused to convert to Islam were brutally tortured and killed. Macedonian Church of that period remembers many martyrs and saints: St. Zlata Meglenska, St. Agatangel Bitolski, St. Spas Radoviški, St. Georgi Kratovski, etc. who gave their lives for Christianity. The fact is that Islam in this period was utterly spread by sword and fire, and indeed it's God's miracle, but also the painful proof of devoted fidelity of the Macedonian people how Macedonia still remained predominantly Christian country. Then, an increased physical torture and Turkish fanaticism has reached its climax. Due to the great terror against unprotected population desperate Islamization of many villages in Veles, Kičevo and Meglensko occurred. This and other circumstances led the Macedonian population to a ulterior depletion, which also reflected on the financial and general situation of the Macedonian Archdiocese. After the illegal administrative abolition of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Istambul (Constantinople) has initially removed the ecclesiastic inherencies from the indigenous Macedonian bishops, which were replaced by foreign '*Phanariot*'<sup>51</sup> bishops from Istanbul, who were not accepted by the local people, as they didn't spoke the language of the flock they've been given. First they banned the Macedonic liturgy and worship in Macedonian cities where they've been appointed. Further, these apostates used their authority only to collect the church taxes, which were then used in political and other purposes. Generally these foreign bishops came to Macedonia with one single aim: to get rich and then return to their mother diocese and enjoy in avidity and slander. They thought of themselves as "humiliated and punished" if appointed to manage people who speak Macedonic languages.

The whole ecclesiastic structure in Macedonia was in serious danger. This caused the Macedonian believers justified rebellion and strong protests. In order to preserve Macedonian Apostolic Church, its millennial traditions and institutions they organized themselves in local Municipal Church Comities and Church Literacy Schools across Macedonia, and openly repudiated the abusive agents of the Istambul (Constantinople) Ecumenical Patriarchate. Examples from the church archives are numerous: it is written down that the people of Skopje in 1823 repudiated the episcope sent from Istanbul, and sent him back from where he came. Then in 1860 it is documented that the people of Ohrid refused to accept the patriarchate-sent episcope Miletij from Istanbul, and they sent him back too. New Macedonian churches were also built, despite the generally harsh situation in the 19th century.

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<sup>51</sup> *Phanar* - a rich suburb in Istanbul, famous for the gas-lanterns (i.e. *Phener* in plain Turkish)



**Above: The Macedonian church of St. Bogoroditsa in the village of Zagorichani, built by local people in 1861**

A strong desire for the conducting of church services in Macedonian saw also the establishment of the St. Nedela church on the outskirts of Gini male in city of Bitola in 1863, where the reintroduction of Macedonian rite continued and was first introduced in the church service on 19 July 1864. It drew a violent reaction from the Patriarchist party, serious enough to warrant the intervention of the local Ottoman police. Continued intense anti-Patriarchate agitation by the Macedonian population of Bitola, prominent individuals, guilds, as well as the village councils of Lopatica, Mogila, Dolno Orizari, Sekirani and Kukurechani, eventually resulted in the St. Nedela church breaking free from Patriarchate jurisdiction and becoming a self-administered Macedonian parish educational institution as of 23 October 1869. Under the initiative of the St. Nedela church council, preparations were soon after undertaken for the construction of a second independent of Patriarchate jurisdiction Macedonian church in Bitola. Thus the St. Bogorojca church was completed and commenced functioning as of 21 September 1871.

Therefore, the Macedonian people under the guide of its own priests, appointed directly by the people, saved their very own Macedonian Apostolic Church from total disaster. Holy artifacts and books in Old Church Macedonic were meticulously copied and preserved for future generations by common people within their own families proper. Deacons and priests chosen by these Church Comities continued the holy service in Macedonic language and rite, professing the original Apostolic teachings just like during the epoch of Bogomils few centuries ago. They transcribed, lectured, and transmitted the Holy Macedonic Gospels and Liturgy across Macedonian Peninsula despite all the forms of mistreatment and persecution used by the church institutions and *Phanariotes* of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul.

One magnificent example of this painstaking and incessant ecclesiastic struggle and holy work of the Macedonian Apostolic Church preachers in this period, in circumstances of oppression, is the Konikovo



Gospel manuscript.<sup>52</sup> Written somewhere at the end of 18th century, and rediscovered by the Finnish historian and philologist Mika Hakkarainen in the Library of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria in 2003, Konikovo Gospel represents an extraordinary example and one of the many holy literacy monuments of Macedonic rite, and exceptional testimony of the enormous spiritual dedication and sacrifice of the Macedonian Apostolic Church priests, deacons and religious followers. It is a hand-written manuscript in vernacular Macedonian (not the formal Church Macedonic language), in what is known as Macedonic dialect of Lower Vardar (Enidže Vardarsko). Written by an unknown author, and grammatically redacted by the hieromonk Pavel (i.e. deacon Paul) Božigropski, a protosingel of the Holy Sepulchre Church in the village of Konikovo (Voden eparchy) in Aegean Macedonia. It is also the oldest known Sunday Gospel in today Modern Macedonian.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, it confirms the uninterrupted millennial continuity and constant lineage of the apostolic teachings and traditions of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - through Macedonian language and liturgy, from the times of Apostle Paul till today. And, it is a firm reminder of the Macedonian people unabated and truly devoted belief in the word of god, a faithfully committed credo that resisted all the foreign invasions, occupations, assimilations, religious and political divisions. Below is an excerpt from the Konikovo Gospel written in 18th century vernacular Macedonian, transliterated both in Latin script and modern Macedonian Cyrillic:

[p001] Ot Ioánna.

Utpérvu béši réčta, i réčta béši sôs Bóga, i Bóg béše réčta. Vóa béše utpérvu sôs Bóga. Síte rabóti zardí nîz lakardíata sá činía, i bîz négu né sa činí níkue ut kólku sá činía. Uf négu béše živót: i živótut [p002] béše sfétut ná ljúditu. I sfetílutu uf temnínata sféti, i temnínata né gu rasbrá. Sá činí edín čuvék puštén ut Bóga, ímitó mu Ioánn. Vóa duídé ná martyría dá martyrísa zardí sfetílutu, dá verûvat síte zardí nîz négu. Né béše ón sfetílutu, amí dá martyrísa zardí sfetílutu. Béše vîdelutu istínckutu tóa štó profetûva sékuí čuvék štó íde ná sfétut. Ná sfétut béše: i sfétut zardí nîz négu sá činí: amí sfétut né gu puzná. Ná sfóite mu duídé, i sfóite mu né gu priáa. I kólku gû priáa ná nîh dadé puvélja dá sá čínat čéda Bóžii, siréč, ná tîe štó verûvat ná ímito mu. Tîe štó néto ut kráv, néto ut sakánitu ná snágata, néto ut sakánitu čuvéčku, amí ut Bóga sá rodía. I réčta sá činí snága i sá zasedé uf nâs, i vîdohmi slávata mu, [p003] sláva katû ná sîn edinoróden ut Tátkutu, Pálen dárba i istína. Ioán martyrísá zardí négu, i vikná i kažá: vóa é deká íde pû méne sá činí prét méne: zaštó mí béše pónaprêšen. I ut ispolnénitó mu nîa síte priéhmi, i zimáhme dárba vrâs dárba. Zaštó zákonut sá dadé zardí nîz Moýséa, amí dárba i istínata sá činí zardí nîz Iisûs Hristós...

[стр.001] От Иоана.

Утперву беши речта, и речта беши сос Бога, и Бог беше речта. Воа беше утперву сос Бога.

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<sup>52</sup> “The Road to Konikovo” by Jouko Lindstedt (University of Helsinki).

<sup>53</sup> It is a clear continuation of Bible translations into Macedonian: nine centuries before it, Cyril and Methodius used the living vernacular Macedonic dialect of the Solun region in their translations of the 9th century; thereafter came a hiatus of almost a millennium, during which the Bible texts did not directly reflect the spoken language of the Macedonian peoples, as the Macedonic Church rite became highly ceremonial; and then again turned back the vernacular Macedonic manuscripts of the 18th/19th centuries. However, whenever the ‘Modern’ period of the Macedonian language began, it certainly was some time in that past millennium.

Сите работи зарди низ лакардиата са чиниа, и биз негу не са чини никуе ут колку са чиниа. Уф негу беше живот: и животут [стр.002] беше сфетут на људиту. И сфетилуту уф темнината сфети, и темнината не гу расбра. Са чини един чувек пуштен ут Бога, имито му Јоан. Воа дујде на мантириа да мантириса зарди сфетилуту, да веруват сите зарди низ негу. Не беше он сфетилуту, ами да мантириса зарди сфетилуту. Беше виделуту истинцкуту тоа што просфетува секуј чувек што иде на сфетут. На сфетут беше: и сфетут зарди низ негу са чини: ами сфетут не гу пузна. На сфојте му дујде, и сфојте не гу приаа. И колку гу приаа на них даде пувелѡа да са чинат чеда Божји, сиреч, на тие што веруват на имито му. Тие што нето ут крав, нето ут саканиту на снагата, нето ут саканиту чувечку, ами ут Бога са родиа. И речта са чини снага и са засиде уф нас, и видохми славата му, [стр.003] слава кату на син единороден у Таткуту, Пален дарба и истина. Јоан мантириса зарди негу, и викна и кажа: воа е дека иде пу мене са чини прет мене: зашто ми беше понапрешен. И ут исполненито му ниа сите приехми, и зимахме дарба врас дарба. Зашто законут са даде зарди низ Мојсеа, ами дарбата и истината са чини зарди низ Исус Ристос...

Despite the incredibly hard times and incessant oppression, Macedonian priests and monks with their dedicated work preserved their apostolic church from disappearance, through self-organized popular preachings, and written and verbal transmission of the millennial church traditions.



Above: a detail from an ikon in the church of St. George, Kurbinovo. 12th century

The next big blow came from Istanbul again. There, in 1870 the Turkish Sultan created another non-canonical “ecclesiastic” political institution, the Bulgar Exarchate... Thus, yet another fraudulent church that wasn’t created by some dedicated community or group of believers, nor any ecclesiastic or another justified reason other than the political one. The evergrowing alienation and desperately intricate situation of these newly forged ecclesiastic fractions was vividly described by the Macedonian archimandrite Teodosiy Gologanov, who in his letter of 21 June 1891 writes:

*“We Macedonians have no such trouble from the Turks, long live the sultan, as from the Greex, Bulgars and Serbs, who like vultures on the carcass attack this our suffered country and want to split it up ... Bulgar Exarchate with its dirty corruption and philistine activities here in Macedonia actually carried most miserable task, trying to take away the sacred identity of Macedonian people and replacing it with another, depriving them from the native language and replacing it with something else, robs all national marks and replaces them with those of other people ... Turks take properties and leave the common people, not reaching for their spirit. They are destroying the body, but they respect our soul. And the Exarchate kills our world in this way, continuously ... We clerics of Macedonian origin need to come together and to raise our people to wake up, to reject foreigners administrations, to dispel Patriarchate and Exarchate, and unite spiritually in the bosom of our church, of our real mother church. It is time to stop division of the same people just because one is assimilated by the Patriarchate, other by the Exarchate, and the third prays to Muhammad...”*

Given the close connection between the Orthodox churches with new local nationalisms (Bulgar, Serb and Greek in this case) Metropolitan Teodosiy knew that no Patriarchate nor Exarchate will agree to restore the apostolic inherencies of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy as a center of the original Macedonian Apostolic Church. Therefore, like Tsar Samoil some nine centuries before him, in 1891 Metropolitan Theodosius tried to negotiate with the papal nuncio in Istanbul (Constantinople) the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church over eventual restoration of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. Then he set the following six conditions:

1. To renew the ancient Ohrid Archiepiscopacy, which will be in canonical unity with the Roman Catholic Church, with immediate blessing of the Holy Father the Pope.
2. The head of the restored Ohrid Archiepiscopacy would be he as autocephalous head of the church.
3. Other people from the high clergy (bishops, deacons and priests) to be born Macedonians and appointed by the archbishop, and bishops can only be confirmed by your holiness.
4. The boundaries of the Archiepiscopacy to coincide with the borders of Macedonia, and as division of the dioceses to keep current.
5. Old Uniats from Kukuško-Poljanska and Strumitsa eparchies to separate from jurisdiction of the Uniat Archbishop of Constantinople, N. B. Nile Izvorov, and to join as eparchies towards the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy.
6. Catholic missionaries, with the exception of the current present in educational and charitable institutions in Macedonia, not to bring new, and those who are already here not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Archdiocese.

On 4 December 1891 the same Teodosiy wrote to Pope Leo XIII, in which he asks the catholic holy father in his own and on behalf of all Orthodox congregations in Macedonia “*to receive us under his wing of the Roman Catholic Church after renewal of the ancient Ohrid Archbishopric, illegally abolished by*



*Sultan Mustafa III in 1767.*” In late November 1891 even negotiations between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Metropolitan Theodosiy began. Actually, the Constantinople/Istanbul Patriarchate in ongoing negotiations with Theodosiy clearly stated that it would accept the Macedonian Metropolitan, but only under its jurisdiction, and accepted none of his conditions, i.e. the restoration of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. This showed that the only reason why the Ecumenical Patriarchate entered in “negotiations” with the Macedonian Metropolitan Theodosiy was its desire to somehow recover the eparchies in Macedonia lost with the non-canonical parallel creation of the Bulgar Exarchate in Istanbul and Serbian church in Sremski Karlovci. But, after the non-canonical agreement of the Constantinople Patriarchate and the government of the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (May 1920), the Macedonian dioceses that were previously under the administration of the Constantinople Patriarchy were attached to these new churches. Thus, from the Sremski Karlovci exarchate a non-canonical “Serbian Patriarchate” was created, which was done on September 12, 1920. In this way, the “unification” of the Orthodox churches based on the territorial premises of the new Serbian state, with the center of spiritual jurisdiction in it, was made. What was then proclaimed as “unification”, from the new patriarchists of the new national church, was exactly the opposite – once united and not-nationally divided church was utterly divided and fragmented along the newly created political borders...

## **Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy restoration in modern times**

The autocephalous Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy after decades passed in obscurity was actually (but not officially) restored in 1859, by nomination of Partenie Zografski (1820-1876) for Kukush-Poljanski episcopate. This was the first triumph of the renewed indigenous Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy in modern times. The Zografski Monastery in that time played the role of the Holy See of Macedonian Apostolic Church, and received under its jurisdiction numerous autonomous Macedonian Eparchies and Church Schools. Thus, after 98 years in illegality, the autochthonous apostolic Christianity in Macedonia started gradually to reemerge under the decades-long politically imposed harsh reality. Its dioceses were divided between several jurisdictions of the new non-canonical politically created neighboring Orthodox Churches. The struggle for restoring of its official apostolic authority and ecclesiastic jurisdiction became particularly fierce at the closing of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. After the Balkan Wars and the World War I the non-canonical Bulgar Exarchate in Vardar (Upper) Macedonia was abolished, and Macedonian Apostolic Church with its eparchies was forcibly subjected to another non-canonical "United Orthodox Church" of the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Hrvats (Lat. *Croats*) and Slovenes (the Kingdom of SHS, "Yugoslavia" as of 1929). Recently published CIA document shows that under these new circumstances Macedonians equally wanted back the rightful jurisdiction of their Macedonian Apostolic Church, as it always was, to be left independent from this non-canonical and artificial church of the Kingdom of SHS.<sup>54</sup> In the document is written down as it follows: *"Since the 1913 annexation of Macedonia to Yugoslavia and the incorporation of its church into the Serb Pravoslav Church, the local Pravoslavs have wanted to establish their own separate Orthodox Church independent of Belgrade ... Under the 30 year rule of Karadjordjević dynasty, which represented Serb dominance and centralism, the wishes of the Macedonians were largely disregarded."*

During the WW2 Bulgar occupation of Macedonia (1941-1945), the church in Macedonia was again forcibly submitted under the administration of the then still unrecognized and non-canonical Bulgar Orthodox Church of the fascist regime in Sofia.

Finally, conditions for official restoration of the inherited autocephaly and ecclesiastic independence of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy were created during the World War II (1941-1945). Macedonia partly freed itself, and started the restoration of its own institutions in modern times. First in 1943, in the village of Izdeglavje in Debar district of Ohrid region, the first Assembly of Macedonian Clergy was held on 21 October, and a decision was taken to form an Archpriests' Governorship, with the aim of its development and reestablishing of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy.

Right before the end of the WW2, in 1944, in the village of Gorno Vranovtsi, Veles district, an Preliminary Committee for the Organization of Macedonian Apostolic Church was officially formed. The same CIA document mentioned above continues: *"The VMRO (Vutreshna Makedonska Revolutsionna Organizatsiya; Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO)) did not interested itself in church affairs until 1945. Since then it has become one of the strongest supporters of an independent, autonomous Macedonian Pravoslav Church. VMRO infiltrated its members into the ranks of the Tito*

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<sup>54</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r013700160010-6>

*communists in (Republic of) Macedonia with instructions to bolster the creation of of a separate Macedonian Church. ... These demands have become stronger since the Tito regime “invited” Metropolitan Josif Cvijić to Belgrade and did not allow him to return to his seat at Skopje. This is because Metropolitan Josif is not only an exponent of Church separatism but also a protector of Macedonian separatism...*” In March of 1945, in Skopje, a Resolution to restore the Archdiocese of Ohrid and Macedonian Apostolic Church was made at the First Clergy and Laity Assembly. This decision was submitted to the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, because since before the World War II the several dioceses in Macedonia were still under the apostate jurisdiction of the then “United Orthodox Church of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians” (formed in the then ‘Kingdom of of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians.’), which later in pre-war Yugoslavia diminished into “Serbian Orthodox Church”. The Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church at first didn’t accept this decision of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy, which resulted in the following actions of the Preliminary Committee Initiative Board: instead of as an autocephalous, they insisted on the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy being recognized as autonomous. This request was also rejected.

Therefore, in 1958, the Second Clergy and Laity Assembly was held in Ohrid and the proposal for restoration of the Ohrid Archdiocese of St. Clement as a Macedonian Orthodox Church was accepted, and Dositey was appointed the first archbishop of the officially restored Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. The Holy Synod of the non-canonical Serbian Orthodox Church then finally agreed with the decisions of the Macedonian Clergy and Laity Assembly in the resolution AS. N<sup>o</sup> 47/1959 and 6/1959, minutes 57 of June 17/4/1959. As a sign of agreement, a solemn Liturgy was concelebrated with the Serbian patriarch German, on July 19, 1959, in the Episcopal Skopje, in the church of St. Menas. Serbian archpriests took part in the consecration of the Macedonian archpriests. At the same time, Clement was ordained the episcope of Prespa and Bitola eparchy. This meant that the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church finally and officially returned the inherent independence and privileges to her mother church, i.e. the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy, which nevertheless remained in canonical unity with the Serbian Orthodox Church. Few days later, in the church of St. Nicholas in Štip, H.E. Naum was ordained the episcope of the Zletovo and Strumitsa eparchy. The Holy Synod of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy was established together with other administrative bodies in the Archdiocese and the dioceses in conformity with the Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Once powerful Macedonian Archdiocese and Patriarchate, with 32 episcopacies under its jurisdiction, the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy in 1959 finally managed to restore its inhered authority over only 4 (four) of its former eparchies.

Further, in May, 1962, accompanied by the patriarch German and other representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Russian Patriarch Alexis of Moscow visited the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. Among them were the metropolitan Nikodim, bishop Pimen and other dignitaries of the Russian Orthodox Church (yet another daughter-church of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy). Macedonian Apostolic Church thus found itself in very odd position - to be canonically recognized by the very own eparchies, which Ohrid Archiepiscopacy helped and raised out of oblivion centuries ago. On the feast of Saints Methodius and Cyril, in the church of the Holy Mother of God Kamenska, in Ohrid, Patriarch Alexis of Moscow, Patriarch German and the Macedonian Metropolitan Dositey concelebrated Holy Liturgy. It was the first Holy Liturgy to be concelebrated by the head of the modern fully restored Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy with heads of other autocephalous Orthodox Churches. Thus, the solemn re-recognition and re-inauguration of the new archbishop of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy in the 20th century was performed in the most canonical and legal way, as prescribed by the church canons and holy laws.



Due to the continuous institutional conflicts and misunderstandings with neighboring newly-created national churches, the Holy Synod of the Macedonian Apostolic Church – Ohrid Archiepiscopacy summoned the Third Clergy and Laity Assembly on July 17, 1967, in Ohrid. At the formal session in the Ohrid church of St. Clement, the Holy Synod reconfirmed the Macedonian Apostolic Church as Autocephalous once again. The act of proclamation was made by the Holy Synod of the Macedonian Apostolic Church during the Holy Liturgy celebrated in the church of St. Clement of Ohrid on July 19, 1967, or exactly on the second centennial after it had been non-canonically banned by the Ottoman authorities.



Above: **Moscow Patriarch Alexis, Serbian Metropolitan German and the Macedonian Archbishop Dositey concelebrate Holy Liturgy in 1962**

The jurisdiction of the Macedonian Apostolic Church spreads not only throughout Macedonia, but also in the church communities abroad. In Republic of Macedonia today it has a total of ten eparchies under its jurisdiction, and there are more than forty Macedonian church districts in the U.S.A., Canada, Australia and Europe, in which virtually all the Macedonian emigrants are enrolled. The education, training and renewal of the clergy of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy is undertaken through the St. Clement Ohridski Theological College founded in 1964, and, since 1967, a Theological Faculty has been operative.

According to Article 17 from the Proclamation of Autocephaly, the Macedonian Orthodox Church as an administrative part of the One, Holy, Universal and Apostolic Church is to observe the Holy Scriptures and the Holy tradition, the Canons of the Apostles and the decrees of the ecumenical councils, and is to follow them and the Constitution of the Macedonian Apostolic Church. Praying humbly for the other ones,

the Macedonian Apostolic Church will always rely on the prayers, blessings and assistance of its younger sibling holy local Orthodox Churches.

## **The Re-Recognition of the Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archbishopric by Serbian and Russian Orthodox churches on May 16 and August 25, 2022**

The hierarchs of the Serbian and Russian Orthodox churches, finally returned to recognize their very own mother-church, and turned back into communion with the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archbishopric, rightful successor of Justiniana Prima.<sup>55</sup> According to the Serbian Council's statement, the hierarchs of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archbishopric, were willing to accept the official re-returning of their millennial canonical status as an Autocephalous and Autonomous ecclesiastic body, and were once again recognized within their full internal independence, that originally was already granted back once before, back in 1959. Then on June 5, His Holiness patriarch Porfirije granted the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archbishopric a Holy Tomos of regained Autocephaly during a concelebration in Belgrade.



The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church followed the suit and officially re-recognized the Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric as an autocephalous Sister Church on 25 August, 2022. Earlier, at its session on May 27, 2022 (Minutes No. 43), the Holy Synod gave thanks to God for the news of the communion having been restored on May 16, between the Serbian and the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Archdiocese of Ohrid as an autonomous Church – the status it already had received

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<sup>55</sup> <https://ocpsociety.org/serbian-patriarchate-recognizes-the-canonical-status-of-the-macedonian-orthodox-church-ohrid-archbishopric/>



back in 1959. It was also reported that on May 15-21, 2022, in reply to a petition from the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Archdiocese of Ohrid, the Bishops' Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church with one accord blessed its re-recognized autocephaly. As a sign of this recognition, the name of the Macedonian Apostolic Orthodox Church – Archdiocese of Ohrid primate His Eminence Archbishop Stefan of Ohrid will be inscribed in the sacred diptychs, reports Patriarchia.ru.<sup>56</sup>

*"To (re-)recognize the Macedonian Orthodox Church - the Archdiocese of Ohrid as an autocephalous sister church and to inscribe the name of its primate, His Beatitude Archbishop Stephen of Ohrid and Macedonia, in the sacred diptychs ... will firmly preserve the holy Orthodox faith in purity and purity and observe fidelity to the Orthodox canonical tradition,"* the synod resolution says.



The Antiochian Orthodox Church is the latest Local Church to officially recognize and enter into communion with the Macedonian Orthodox Church - Ohrid Archbishopric on October 19, 2022. Other Orthodox churches across the world are also expected to soon follow this example of common Christian values, shared and regained with this act of Eucharistic communion within the universal Orthodox Church of Jesus Christ and his Holy Father and Spirit.

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<sup>56</sup> <http://www.patriarchia.ru/en/db/text/5956351.html>







## **The Symbols of Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy**

The cross (+) was heraldic symbol of the ancient Macedonian state from immemorial times, and in the 4th century BCE Alexander III of Macedon was wearing it on the shoulders of his Macedonian royal uniform. Older than Christianity the cross represents the union of the masculine and feminine energies, through which all life is created. In other words, the vertical line of the cross represents the male principle and/or Sun or Heavens, and the horizontal line represents the female principle and/or moon or earth. The



Above: **Ancient Macedonian coins from 6th and 5th century BCE**

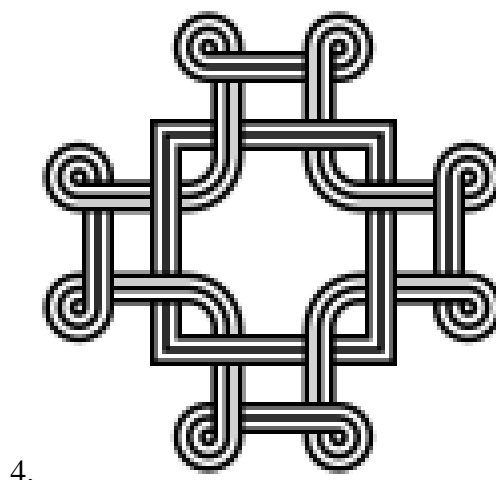
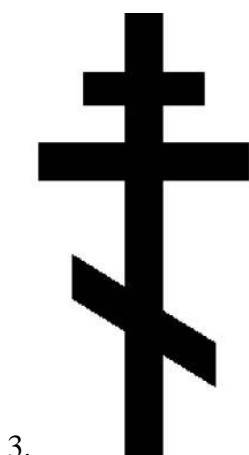
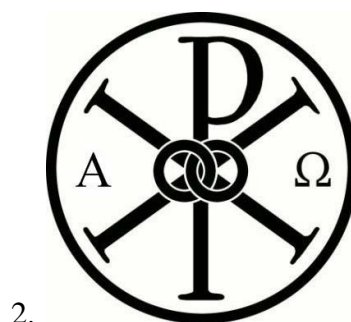
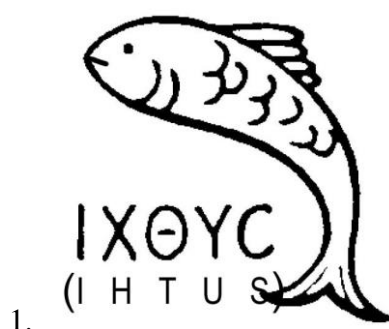
cross was also an emblem of the ancient Macedonian state, which can be seen clearly on the coinage



from that period. In those pagan times, the horizontal line “—” in Old Macedonian syllabic symbolized today’s letter 'A', i.e. the ‘she-first’, or the primordial Great Supreme Mother-Goddess of Upper Macedonia (today Republic of Macedonia); and the vertical line “|” represented the Supreme Father-God of Lower (Aegean) Macedonia, or 'He-1st'.

The extensive adoption of the cross as a Christian iconographic symbol arose from the 4th century. Centuries after the coinage with Macedonian Cross it was adopted as the personal coat of arms by Konstantin (Anglicized: *Constantine*) I the Great, himself Macedonian too, and after that was finally adopted by Christians in the 7th century. Whatever Constantine’s motives were, the cross had nothing to do with Jesus Christ. The cross is, in fact, pagan in origin. And, not until the pontificate of Agathon (AD 608) was Christ represented as a man on a cross. During the reign of Constantine Pogonatus, by the Sixth Synod of Constantinople (Canon 82) it was ordained that instead of the ancient symbols (which had been the fish, pigeon, palm tree, etc.) the figure of a man nailed to a cross should be represented. All this was confirmed by pope Adrian I.

Why then, was this Macedonic pagan symbol promoted? Apparently, to make it easier for pagans to accept “Christianity.” Surprisingly enough, devotion to any pagan symbol is clearly condemned by the Bible...



Above: **Christian symbols throughout the ages (from top left to bottom right): 1. the very first Christian symbol - the fish of Jesus (Ihtus); 2. the Constantine Ro Labarum; 3. the Old**

**Macedonic universal Orthodox cross; 4. the contemporary cross of the apostolic Macedonian Rightglorious Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy as of XI century**

However, the cross symbol was already associated with Christians in the 2nd century AD, as is indicated in the anti-Christian arguments cited in the Octavius of Minucius Felix, chapters IX and XXIX, written at the end of that century or the beginning of the next, and by the fact that by the early 3rd century the cross had become so closely associated with Christ that Clement of Alexandria, who died between 211 and 216, could without fear of ambiguity use the phrase τὸ κυριακὸν σημεῖον (the Lord's sign) to mean the cross, when he repeated the idea, current as early as the apocryphal Epistle of Barnabas, that the number 318 (in Greek numerals, ΤΙΗ) in Genesis 14:14 was interpreted as a foreshadowing (a "type") of the cross (T, an upright with crossbar, standing for 300) and of Jesus (IH, the first two letters of his name ΙΗΣΟΥΣ, standing for 18).

These apocryphal symbols show the millennial evolution of Christianity, from the anonymous sect under the Zodiacal symbol of Fish (as it was the astrologic era of Pisces), through the obvious Magianism period-symbol with the "Flower of life" symbolism, until the Macedonic cross adopted as of the 7th century AD.



Above: the 3rd century seal representing the Macedonic Orpheus Bakikos (i.e. *Bachus*) crucified and on seventh heaven (symbolized by 7 crosses)

Also the famous ancient Macedonian Star (or Sun) from Kutlesh is depicted frequently in the Macedonian churches. It is regularly found on the red dress of Holy Virgin Mother of God, on the ceremonial cups, on many ikons, etc.



Above: **the Macedonian Sun on the columns in the church of St. Dimitri Solunski in Bitola**

Next page: **the same application on the churches, gates in Prilep, and Virgin Mary ikons**

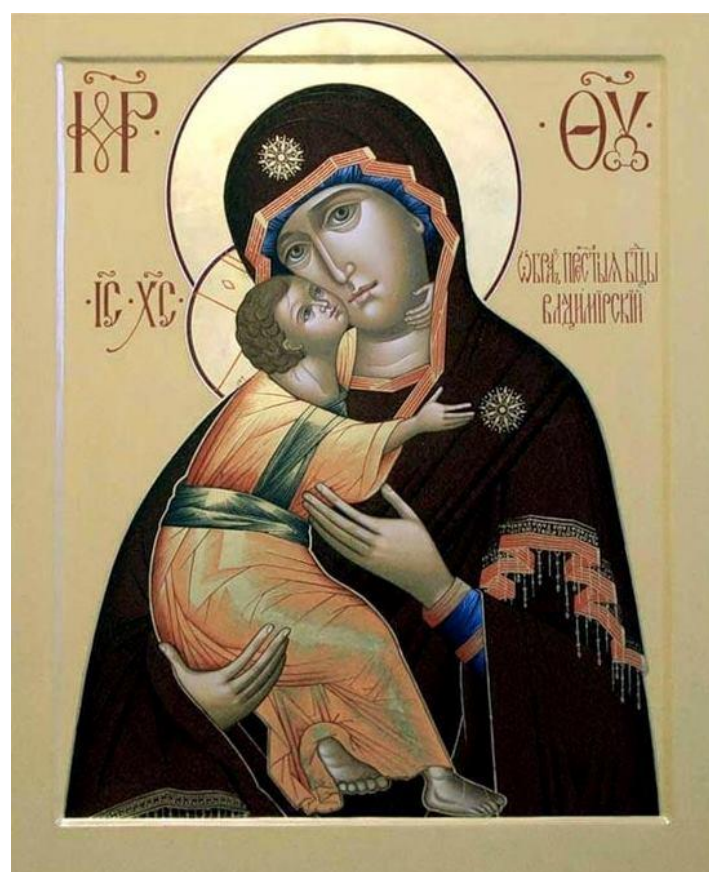








Gates of a church from 1750's from Prilep, Macedonia



The Eastern-style crosier or '*Pateritsa*' ('*Father's staff*') with serpents or dragons representing the staff of Moses, is yet another Orthodox Christianity mark. It's interpreted also as the Alpha and Omega principle or of the duality of the Father and the Son (toward the Holy Spirit).



Above: a **typical Macedonic Orthodox bishop staff from 19th century**, and  
Below: **modern variations of the Pateritsa staff and (on the next page) the Holy Macedonian archbishop G.G. Stefan with his archiepiscopal staff**







Next common symbol of Christianity in Macedonia is the double-headed eagle. On the territory of Macedonia, the eagle is found as early as on the coins with Amyntas III in the 4th century BCE, then more frequently from the time of the rule of Roman Empire. The eagle was also on the coins minted by despot Ugljesha, the brother of king Volkashin, the founder of Mark's Monastery, and from the 14th century it became a frequent motif in churches and monasteries. The double-headed eagle also becomes a regular part of the jewelry of the women's costume, usually as a buckle to which strings of money are connected, but the most common use as a symbol in Macedonia is through the tradition of the Orthodox Church.

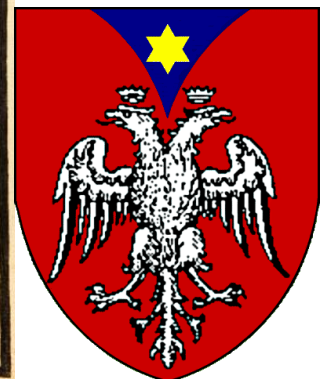
Below: **the 2-headed Christian Eagle, universal symbol of all Eastern Orthodox Churches**





The double-headed eagle is one of the most recognizable symbols of Christian Orthodoxy today. It is millennia-old tradition to inscribe the year of construction in a plaque with a double-headed eagle when a church was built. This symbol was used out of respect for the traditional heritage of the Romeian Empire. The dating procedure was practiced during the construction of most temples, regardless of the time and under whose jurisdiction they were built.

It should be noted here the George Kastriot coat of arms, during his campaign against the Ottomans, when he took the double-headed eagle as a symbol of his Orthodox credo, and made it his insurgency flag in 1444. Later, when Austro-Hungary created Albanian “nation”, it took this flag, modified it with red color and adapted it for their newly created Albanian state, and this became the official flag of today Albania.







Provisional Government  
of Albania, 1912



Above left: first official Albanian flag from 1912, and right: the ones of the postwar 1946-1992 period, and on the next page: the transition to communist five-rays star<sup>57</sup>



According to tradition, the roots of double-headed eagle come from the very beginnings of the first Christian kingdom, the one in Constantinople. Namely, when the holy emperor Constantine I the Great (306-337) united the divided Roman Empire and became its sole ruler, he introduced it as a symbol of unity – two heads (East and West) in one body. Since the time of the Romeian Vasilevs (Basileus) Isaac Comnenus (1057-1059), the double-headed eagle has been used both as a decorative motif of the imperial court and on the ceremonial robes of members of the imperial family. This sign also gets its other meaning – it symbolized the unity between the church and the state, which acted according to the principle of symphony, harmony between the spiritual and worldly spheres in the Christian society. As one of the symbols of Orthodoxy and the Orthodox state it was applied in almost all churches in Macedonia. Indeed, in Macedonia there is no older church in which the double-headed eagle is not found. They are usually attached to the outside, on the north-western part of the north wall of the monastery or church.

<sup>57</sup> <https://ozoutback.com.au/Albania/flags/index.html>



Below: today MPC-OA official heraldic emblem, depicting the St. Sophia cathedral and old Holy See of the Ohrid Archdiocese





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